

The Black Cat

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October 1902

According to Omar.

Edna Bruce Strong.

For Dredgum-Summers.

Deadman's Hook.

Edna Walker.

A Brilliant Coincidence.

Anna Brown O'Brien.

Made to Order.

Edna O'Brien.

Robert Walker.

The Delegates from Dulyerton.

E. O'Brien.

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A Human Chameleon.*

BY NEWTON NEWKIRK.



HE was sleeping. As I stood over his cot a nurse told me he had come to the hospital the night before and asked to be given medical attention. He had the air and dress of a gentleman and tendered in advance the money for his treatment. More of him than this I did not learn.

When the nurse moved away I seated myself and, taking his hand, felt for the pulse. As I counted the beats my eyes were on the small hand of my watch. When I looked up his eyes were open and on mine.

"What is the pulsation, doctor?" he queried.

"One hundred and four."

"A trifle high?"

"Yes."

His voice was rich and had in it the accent of education and refinement.

"You will find the trouble here, doctor," and he patted the right side of his neck with a finger. Examination showed he was suffering from a small cancerous growth. I advised its removal when the fever symptoms had subsided, to which he readily acquiesced. As I turned to a small table and began to prescribe he reached out and touched my arm. There was a mingled look of concern and alarm in his face.

"Will you kindly go away for a few minutes, doctor — only a short while — will you?"

The pitiful quaver of entreaty in his tones for the moment overcame my curiosity at his strange request. I was about to invent some roundabout question which would bring out his reason for wanting me to withdraw, when his manner stopped me short. His hands and teeth were clenched and he strove with a mighty effort,

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like a man who fights off some strange spell. All the time he looked pleadingly into my eyes.

"Oh, doctor — won't you please go — for the sake of God — hasten!"

Turning quickly from my strange patient I crossed the floor and entered a large cabinet in the centre of the room in which drugs and supplies were kept. A man of medicine — especially a hospital physician — encounters numberless puzzling mental derangements in his experience and, for the time, I charged the new man's odd behavior to that side of the medical ledger. Nevertheless, my curiosity was aroused. Looking about I observed a small chink through the frame partition of the cabinet and clapped my eye to it instantly. I commanded a full view of the man I had just left. He was not more than thirty feet from me. There was a screen on either side of his cot which shut him off from the observation of other patients. He lay propped up, with his feet toward me and his hands lying on the snowy coverlet. I studied his face carefully. It was in natural repose. It was —! I winked in rapid succession to remove a blur from before my vision and looked again.

The man's head was gone!

I drew quickly back from the chink and examined it to make sure there was certainly a hole there. Then I put my eye to the opening again. The head remained missing! His hands —! They, too, were absent! Both seemed to be severed where the sleeves of his sleeping gown ended and the white coverlet began. When I looked again for the head I plainly saw the collar, but above it was neither neck nor head! Where the head should have been I saw the surface of the white pillow and the vertical iron rungs of the bed-head. Then I glanced down at myself to see if I were really the being I seemed to be. When I peeped again through the hole I beheld no longer the headless and handless man. Those members were again in place. He was looking toward the cabinet and I saw his lips frame the word "Doctor!" He was calling me.

I stopped long enough to wipe away the perspiration which had gathered on my forehead and, stepping out, walked toward him with as much of an air of unconcern as I could assume.

"Thank you," he said, simply. His very tone would have conveyed the sense of deepest gratitude if he had said "Apples." After writing out the prescription I left him.

When I had finished my rounds I examined the hospital register. My headless patient was entered in the name of Emanuel Riccardo, of Florence, Italy. I could not dismiss him from my mind and sought some pretext to visit him again that night. He was lying quite still, yet not asleep, and greeted me with a smile. I sat down and engaged him in conversation. I found Signor Riccardo the most fascinating and brilliant man I have ever met. In a short hour he took me all the way around the habitable globe, shifting the scenes east and west on the continents, or from the scent-laden atmosphere of the tropics to the frozen zones of the polar regions. I listened in rapture and left him regretfully. For the time I forgot the inexplicable occurrence of the morning, to which he made no reference. I had a natural and professional curiosity to unravel the uncanny mystery, but it was obvious that Signor Riccardo wished me not to know, and common courtesy forbade me trying to draw from him his peculiar secret.

Another time — three days later — as I sat near his cot with my back to him, writing at the stand, a peculiar quaver in his voice as he talked made me turn my eyes quickly toward him.

"Don't look at me, doctor — please — not now!" he pleaded.

He had spoken too late. My eyes were upon him as he uttered the words. His head was gone, but the voice came from where it should have been. He held up one handless arm in protest as I gazed stupidly at the headless trunk. Then the invisible fingers clutched the coverlet and pulled it completely over him. I turned away and tried to write, but my hand trembled, and laying down the pen I waited during what seemed an interminable period. I heard the clothing being adjusted behind me and when I looked around his eyes were closed. He feigned sleep, and I left him.

Two days afterward, Miss West, the nurse in charge of Signor Riccardo's ward, entered my office, white and trembling. This was an unusual manifestation on the part of a trained attendant, to whom surgery and even deaths were merely details of hospital work. The girl sank weakly into a chair and gazed at me strangely.

"Am I myself, doctor, or — is it true?"

Then she plunged on as if I could understand, and I believed I knew what was coming.

"When it happened the first time I thought I must have been deceived, but now — not ten minutes ago — when I came to his cot suddenly, the head and the hands were gone. Oh, it was dreadful!"

"You mean —?" I queried.

"Riccardo!" she gasped.

.
He lay quietly on the operating table with his fine, swarthy face toward the stand on which I arranged my instruments. Miss West stood with bottle and muzzle ready to administer the anæsthetic when I should give the word. He was cheerful and talked glibly. I had assured him the operation would be in no wise difficult or dangerous, which was true, and the last words which came from under the muzzle were, "I have breathed worse things — and better."

In a few minutes he was deep under, yet the nurse still held the muzzle over his nostrils as I turned to a stand to choose my instrument. I heard her try to call me, and faced about quickly. Miss West was shrinking away from the prostrate figure. She had left the muzzle lying on the face — not on the face — there was no face — nor head! The muzzle seemed to be floating in mid-air where the face should have been. The handless arms were lying at his sides.

I strove to master a nameless feeling as I advanced to the memberless figure, and lifting the muzzle, placed my hand against — against the nose, which I felt without seeing! Moving my fingers over the invisible face, I traced the chin, the moustache, the rounded cheeks, the depressions of the eyes, the forehead — and felt, as plainly as the sense of touch can convey, the thick, wavy hair of Signor Riccardo's head. Then I sought the hands and held each in turn. I could count their fingers and feel their warmth, but to my eyes I seemed to hold but air. The room was bathed in bright light, yet it was as if I felt the head and hands of a man with my eyes closed or in intense darkness. Readjusting the muzzle I waited for the strange spell to pass. The

curse stood apart, trembling, but when the head and hands began to outline themselves from apparent nothingness to visible flesh and blood, she gave her attention to administering the anæsthetic.

With the return of Signor Riccardo's head and hands he began to communicate his subconscious vagaries in speech and the first words arrested me as I stood over him, knife in hand.

"They said the curse would follow me — to my death, but I did not believe! I had rather died on that lonely island than be shunned by man and pointed out as one bewitched. Is there no cure — in the name of God — is there no help?"

A sudden thought came to me; I would question his "sleeping-self" — his *alter ego*!

"There is help, Riccardo!" I said in loud, distinct tones. His face seemed to beam with a great hope, although he was yet under the influence of the drug and his eyes were closed.

"Help — for me?" he questioned, eagerly.

"Yes!"

"How?"

"You must answer my questions."

"I will!"

"What is this curse?"

"The Chameleon fever!"

"Where did it overtake you?"

"Madagascar — I was exploring the interior for diamonds — you say you can cure me?"

"Yes — what is this Chameleon fever?"

"Those who have had it are doomed to strange spells which they cannot control, during which the exposed portions of the body take on the color of the backgrounds against which they rest. This gives the flesh the appearance of having vanished altogether."

"Do you suffer while these spells last?"

"No — can you cure me?"

"I will try; now lie very still!"

In wonderment I began to operate. At the first incision I observed a structure in Signor Riccardo's skin different from anything I had ever read of or met with in histology. When the

nurse had brought me a powerful magnifying glass I examined it minutely. Instead of one secondary stratum of cuticle where I would look for the coloring matter of the skin, there were many layers, and each seemed to hold a different hue of pigment — a condition I had never met or heard of. I could understand how the exudations of vari-colored pigments from these different layers might so blend as to give the surface of the skin the complexion of surrounding objects, and thus render it invisible, like that of a chameleon. Anxious as I was to pursue this strange freak of physical structure, I discharged it to proceed with the operation.

Signor Riccardo recovered rapidly, and at the end of two weeks was ready to be discharged. As he grasped my hand at parting he looked into my eyes as if there were something he would tell me. Suddenly he seemed to think better of it.

“Good-bye, doctor!” he said, cheerily. “If I have acted strangely at times I hope you will yet think well of me. It was — something — something beyond my control — Good-bye!”

And the “Human Chameleon” pressed my hand and was gone on his wanderings. Some day I shall visit Madagascar to study that strangest of all human maladies — Chameleon fever.



Mr. Corndropper's Hired Man.*

(A Companion to "Ely's Automatic Housemaid.")

BY W. M. STANNARD.



HERE was a mild sensation at the East Slow-cumbe railway station when a stranger, bearing a two-gallon can, carefully crated, stepped off the 3.30 accommodation, and there were many speculations hazarded as to his identity, business and destination, but, without stopping to question or exchange words with any of the waiting crowd, he stepped across the platform to where Farmer Corndropper was waiting with his gray mare and buggy. He handed the farmer a letter, stepped into the buggy and was driven slowly away. Without a word of welcome or of apology to his visitor, the farmer opened the letter and proceeded intently to read the contents:

DEAR SIR:—We forward you herewith—or, rather this will be handed to you by—Tom, our Automatic Farmer (Ely's patent). If same proves unsatisfactory after one month's constant use, money will be refunded. The active principle by which the farmer is controlled is contained in an oil (two gallons forwarded) embodying all the essential nutritive elements which, acting upon our improved substitute for cerebral tissue, contained in the farmer's cranial cavity, results in a faculty which cannot be distinguished from ordinary common sense.

Tom is guaranteed to do twenty-four hours' work a day—seven days a week, if necessary—without strain. He can perform any ordinary task that an intelligent man can do.

IMPORTANT.—The automatic farmer will obey *only* the person who feeds him. His present control expires at 6 P. M. to-day, after which hour he will be subject to your orders.

Convinced that Tom will give perfect satisfaction, we remain,
Yours sincerely,

THE ELY MFG. Co. (Limited).

Josiah Corndropper meditatively folded and pocketed this letter, clucked to the gray mare and fixed his gaze upon his silent companion, who, however, paid no heed. He was tall, broad-shouldered and robust looking, with a wonderfully intelligent and life-like countenance, upon which his owner gazed with wonder and admiration.

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Tom promptly followed his master when he alighted at the farmhouse and seated himself in a corner of the kitchen, where he remained, dumb and deaf to all the subdued comments upon his appearance and deportment.

"No, M'riar," answered the farmer to his wife's enquiries, "he won't be ready t' use t'll six o'clock, so ye'll hev ter wait," and she returned reluctantly to her duties.

At six o'clock, sharp, following the printed directions stitched to the back of Tom's vest, Josiah cautiously lifted the brim of his straw hat, poured some "food" into the aperture disclosed and stepped back to await results.

Instantly the figure gazed curiously around and then sat upright at attention, regarding his owner enquiringly.

"Gid up!" said Josiah.

Tom promptly arose and the farmer and his wife stumbled over the furniture in the involuntary backward movement which they simultaneously made.

"What *you* laughin' fer, drat yer?" shouted Josiah, regaining his equilibrium, but the automaton made no response.

"Waal, he don't talk back, like some hired men," exclaimed Mrs. Corndropper, amused and relieved.

"Course, he's only a machine," said the farmer, mollified. "Tom, go milk the cows."

This order was obeyed with neatness and dispatch. Four great pails were soon standing on the dairy floor, and Tom was awaiting further instructions.

"Waal, by gum, ye do work mighty spry," ejaculated Josiah. "Ye might 's well go out an' finish the chores," and Tom was gone like a flash. Soon the wood box was brimming, the animals foddered, and all the odds and ends of the day's work attended to in less than half the usual time, and the indefatigable farmer had again reported for duty.

Josiah scratched his head reflectively. "Able to work all night, is he? Guess I'll set him t' buildin' stun wall. Here, Tom, go out 'n straighten out th' wall around the ten-acre lot. Then in the mornin', 'bout four o'clock, come in an' wait at the back door, till I give ye su'thin' else t' do." Tom was out of sight in the direction of the ten-acre lot before Corndropper had done wondering.

When Josiah came down in the morning the first thing he saw was the automaton, standing stolidly on the back porch, evidently awaiting orders.

"Mornin', Tom. It's time ter milk an' do up the chores ag'in. Seems ez ef as intelligent-lookin' a cuss ez you be would almost 'a known it 'thout bein' told." Before this mild criticism, the only reproof which his owner ever bestowed upon him, was finished, Tom was in the barnyard, dispatching the work.

"Waal, by gum!" chuckled Corndropper, "an' only costs six cents a day, nuther. Gee, ef this ain't a snap." He scanned all he could see of the stone wall, and soliloquized:

"I b'leeve he's done it all right. I must set him 'bout the farmin' right away; won't need t'hire nobody this season!" and Josiah smiled audibly over the saving of three men's hire as he went in to breakfast.

Picking his teeth on the porch, he said to his patient helper:

"Waal, Tommy, may's well start in plowin' to-day. Yoke up th' three-year olds, an' then I'll tell ye what ter do."

But Tom did not move.

"What ails ye?"

Josiah was alarmed. Could the machinery be out of order so soon? Was the thing a failure, after all? Visions of disappointed hopes flitted through his mind faster than he could formulate them, but as he stood in thought he happened to glance at the clock. The automaton must be fed regularly twice in twenty-four hours or it would "strike."

"Waal, by gum! Why didn't I think of that before?"

So Tom had his breakfast at once, after which he went to the barn and under fresh instructions returned with the astonished animals and with the big plow under one arm.

"Waal, by gum!" exclaimed Josiah.

As the days went on Tom plowed and planted, hoed, hayed and harvested, with no assistance other than general directions. He did all the "chores," indoors and out, and when farm work was slack, made a firm friend of Mrs. Corndropper by beating carpets, moving furniture, scrubbing paint and blacking stoves.

Josiah thoroughly enjoyed the change. From being a hard-worked farmer, with three hired men to look after, he became a

man of leisure, giving his attention to the settlement of important local and national affairs — at the village grocery.

Spring had passed, summer had come and gone, and autumn was waning, when one brisk October morning Josiah announced :

“ I’m a-goin’ over ter th’ county seat to-day, to see ’bout cancel-
lin’ that morgidge — we’ve made ’nough this summer to pay it off
— an’ as I hain’t nothin’ special for Tom t’do, I’m a-goin’ ter
leave him fer you.”

“ Now, Josiah, you needn’t do no sech thing ! Don’t you think
I c’n look out f’r myself, ’thout havin’ a iron man ’round t’ keep
tabs on me ? ”

Josiah saw that something was wrong.

“ No, M’riar, I thought mebbe you’d hev suthin’ fer him
t’ do.”

She said at first that she hadn’t, but the truth was, that having
had no experience in “feeding” Tom, the act upon which his
obedience depended, she rather dreaded the responsibility.

Josiah perceived her reluctance, and took a firm stand.

“ Now, M’riar, I want ye to come right out and feed him ; might
as well larn fust as last. Needn’t use him ef y’ don’t want’er.”

So Mrs. Corndropper meekly accompanied her husband to Tom’s
quarters and fed the automaton, who then, at her command,
sat in a kitchen corner to be ready in case of need.

“ Don’t fergit ter hev him do the chores,” said her husband, as
he drove off.

When she was actually alone, she found the silence oppressive.
Her thoughts, in spite of her best intentions, ran on the many
depredations recently committed in neighboring towns, and sup-
posed to be the work of tramps, and though she had never been
molested by any of the fraternity, she could not help feeling ap-
prehensive.

“ I wish’t old Grip was here,” she thought, forgetting Tom en-
tirely ; “ he use ter seem almost human, an’ would ha’ been kinder
comp’ny. Don’t s’pose nuthin’ ’ll happen, but he’d be wuth two
men t’ lay out a tramp.”

But toward eleven o’clock her fears were forgotten, and she was
just about to peel the potatoes for dinner, when a shadow fell upon
the threshold, and she turned to see her worst apprehensions

realized — there stood two of the dirtiest and most villanous-looking specimens of man she had ever seen.

“Please, mum, will yer gin us suthin’ to eat?”

“I never feed tramps.”

“Say, Bill, git onter dat!”

“Ef ye two don’t git out pretty lively, I’ll set th’ dog on yer!”

The tramps indulged in a hearty laugh, and then one said, in a peremptory tone:

“Come, ole lady, trot out yer grub, or we’ll help ourselves.”

Mrs. Corndropper’s temper, never of the mildest, was now strained beyond endurance, and she emptied the tin pan of potatoes and water over her visitors.

With the aid of a wet dish rag and two towels, she was soon bound, gagged and helpless, and was obliged to sit speechless in the kitchen while the tramps rummaged the pantry and gorged themselves on her abundant and unsurpassed cooking.

Then they proceeded to investigate the closets and dining-room for liquid refreshments and “boodle.”

While both were busily engaged in ransacking the sideboard, an idea occurred to Mrs. Corndropper. Wriggling and twisting, she rubbed the towel binding her hands upon a projecting nail until it parted, and then quickly untied the one fastening her to the chair. She took out her gag as she stole quietly to the corner where Tom was sitting, and whispered in his ear.

The tramps had just discovered a plump stocking in a drawer of the sideboard, and were about appraising its contents.

“Gosh, Jim, dis is der stuff! Ain’t we playin’ in great — ”

He dropped the stocking with a howl, as a sharp rap descended upon his head. There was a simultaneous yell from Jim, two more blows and two loud screams.

“Now, Tom, take ’em by the scruff o’ the neck, and thump their heads together.”

Howls, curses, kicks and blows were alike futile. The iron clutch kept its hold, and the thumps were delivered with clock-like regularity.

Mrs. Corndropper calmly superintended.

“Now, shake ’em up *well*!”

The motion of the automaton changed, and dislocated curses and

disconnected kicks, accompanied by the rattle of boots, heads and teeth, testified to the thoroughness of the shaking process.

"Take 'em outdoors and squeeze 'em," was the next order, and the smothered execrations that floated in through the window told of a literal execution of the command.

Mrs. Corndropper closed and locked the windows and doors, pocketed the key, and said to Tom:

"There, that'll do; pick 'em up and go along ahead o' me."

Tom had them under his arms like two grain sacks, and was half way to the gate. As he passed through, both tramps made vigorous efforts to hold on to the gate posts, but only badly wrenched arms and roars of pain resulted.

Then they began to beg and plead for pardon and release, but Mrs. Corndropper paid no attention, and the little procession entered the village surrounded by small boys, and soon attracted half the floating population. At the constable's door the tramps were handcuffed and committed to the lock-up, and Mrs. Corndropper entered a formal complaint.

Two weeks later she received the following letter:

MRS. JOSIAH CORNDROPPER,

Dear Madam: — Please find enclosed check for \$500, being the amount of the joint reward offered by the towns of Enfield and Slowcumbe for the apprehension of James Sullivan and William McNulty, said desperadoes having been captured under your direction. Also please accept our thanks for your public-spirited action.

Yours respectfully,

HENRY HAWBUCK, *Town Treasurer.*

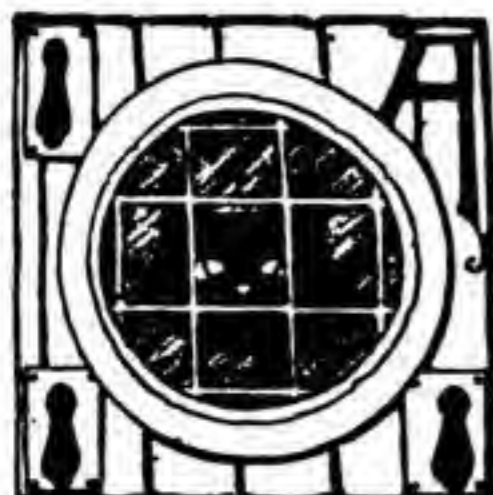
As no vote of thanks could be made intelligible to Tom, and no increase of rations would be grateful or necessary to his inner anthropomorphy, the Corndroppers were forced to be content with putting their appreciation into a testimonial to the Ely Mfg. Co. (Limited), and such public utterances as Josiah found time to make at the grocery, where he never tired of boasting of a hired man who could do the work of three, on six cents a day, and earn his employer a five hundred dollar premium the first year.



Dematerialization.*

(A travesty on Stockton's "Amos Kilbright.")

BY C. MASON.



FAIR young thing, with tender blue eyes, entered Woodworth's office and calmly seated herself. A glance at her portfolio impelled him to seek refuge in the cool brick vault of his neighbor across the passage, Barker, who called himself a banker, but the lady barred the way.

"No," he said desperately, without waiting to be interrogated, "I don't want to subscribe for a History of the War, nor Lives of the Candidates, nor Picturesque Anything."

"But, honored sir," replied the mild, simple and rather simpering young person, "I do not ask you to subscribe for anything, unless, indeed, you would honor me by taking a ticket —"

"Ticket nothing!" again interrupted Woodworth. "I've no leisure for amusements. My time is all taken up with my profession — and science."

"Ah, that is what drew me hither!" beamed the beautiful girl. "I perceived by your sign that you were a lawyer, and I have heard that you are a member — a prominent one — of the Psychical Research Society. In one or both capacities I think you can do me an inestimable service."

Woodworth, touched at two vulnerable points, unbent.

"You see, kind sir," she continued, "that I am a materialized spirit. My manager, Mr. Shockton, who is stopping at the hotel — here is his card — called me forth from the spirit world by mistake for Martha Washington, with whom I was contemporaneous."

Woodworth had noticed the antique style and courtly bearing of his lovely visitor.

"He delayed so long in endeavoring to correct his error," she went on, "that, instead of remaining in the misty, indistinct form

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in which spirits are preferably presented, I became as thoroughly substantial as when I was before on earth, one hundred and thirty years ago."

"Upon my word, young lady — or, venerable dame —" the lawyer corrected with halting courtesy, "this is a very extraordinary statement. Do you know that you render yourself liable to prosecution for obtaining money under false pretences when you attempt to sell tickets on such a tale as that?"

She smiled trustingly. "No, sir, I did not know that. Indeed, I am only beginning to learn the strange things of your wonderful century — but I like them very much. Though my familiarity with the distaff and spindle, the needle and quill pen will no longer afford me a livelihood, I have an ardent longing to learn the sewing machine or the typewriter — and become a New Woman. I am most anxious to resume the life prematurely cut short in 1770, in my eighteenth year, when I died from what was erroneously diagnosed as a quinsy. I have reason to believe that, had I been properly treated for diphtheria with an antitoxin serum, I would have lived to a good old age."

"What is there to prevent you from doing so now?" asked Woodworth, touched and interested immeasurably by his singular client.

"Because my master — for so I must call him — Mr. Shockton, who brought me from the other world, is determined to send me back. I fear that, from mercenary motives, he means to dematerialize me at his very next séance."

Woodworth hurriedly thought of all known legal processes, but neither *habeas corpus*, *ne exeat*, nor any other writ with which he was familiar seemed a remedy against the peculiar form of extradition proposed by Shockton.

Putting on his hat, he exclaimed:

"You sit right there while I interview this tyrant, Miss — beg your pardon?"

"Amy Alright was my name before," she answered sweetly.

Finding the spiritual manager in his improvised office at the hotel, the lawyer addressed him by name, saying: "I warn you to desist from your persecution of my client, Miss Amy Alright. She is perfectly satisfied with 'this mundane sphere,' as the re-

porters call it, and intends to remain here. I shall take steps to enjoin you from making her the subject of further experiment."

"Take a ticket," was Shockton's cordial response, thrusting out a card. "One dollar, please; 7.30 this evening. We are going to dematerialize the chit this very night, and if it doesn't come off, call me all the liars you like. Next!"

"One moment, Mr. Shockton," said Woodworth severely. "I understand you to say that you intend to dematerialize, which I suppose means to disembody — to cause to disappear —"

"Into thin air — evaporate — *vamosé!*" answered the medium, in a business-like tone.

"Cause to disappear a person now living? That, my dear sir, is murder!"

"Wrong!" replied Shockton. "Who is this girl? where does she hail from? She has been dead one hundred and thirty years. Can't kill a person twice, you know. What good is she, anyhow? She's way behind the times — can't even sell a ticket to her own dematerialization."

"Then you are determined to dematerialize the lady again?" demanded Woodworth, somewhat demoralized.

"Sure; come and see for yourself. Take a ticket, and one for your wife."

"I shall certainly come — with the police. You insist on making this preposterous experiment?"

"Fact. But tell you what I'll do. You may take the young woman — lock her up — do anything you like with her, and I'll bet you a cool hundred I'll dematerialize her all the same."

Woodworth clutched at this proposition — he began to see a way out. The Psychical Research Society was hastily summoned in special session, and Amy Alright was introduced to President Barker and the members. Her frankness and timidity convinced the most sceptical among them that she, at least, was innocent of collusion with the medium. She appeared terribly to dread the threats of Shockton.

"Oh, gentlemen," she pleaded, "put me under ground; put me in some strong place, where it will be impossible to get at me. I am so tired of being a spirit. Don't let me be dematerialized again!"

Provided with a lunch from the hotel, wrapped in napkins, she was smuggled into Barker's Bank — it was dignified by that name in the village — and locked into its roomy old brick vault, and a committee signed an affidavit to that effect.

Then all the Psychical people attended Shockton's séance. It was very long and very mysterious. For two hours the audience — they could not be called spectators — sat in darkness, listening to soft music and waiting for Amy Alright to appear.

At last there came a gentle tapping. "Ah, ha!" exclaimed Shockton, "she comes! Who goes there?"

"The spirit of Mistress Amy Alright, who died of the quinsy in 1770."

"Are you in the flesh, or in the spirit?"

"A spirit, alas! Oh, woe is me!"

"There you are, gentlemen!" said Shockton, switching on the light. "Now produce your Amy, if you can."

The audience, led by the Psychical Research committee, trooped back to Barker's Bank. Heavens! The man had won his bet — Amy had dematerialized after all.

So had the contents of the bank!

The only material evidences remaining of the guileless girl and her work were the crumbs of her luncheon, the napkins in which it had been wrapped, and a hotel table knife — snapped short off — which had served as a screwdriver. The big, old-style locks, with their screws, lay on the floor.

"O Blavatsky!" groaned Barker, "what idiots we have been!"



In An Unknown World.*

BY JOHN DURWORTH.



It is worth something to have passed through an experience absolutely unique in the history of mankind — to have known sensations vouchsafed to no human being in the past, and which will probably remain forever sealed from the race in the future. Such has been my peculiar lot, and as nearly as words will permit I shall give a plain story of the facts, and thus add my mite to the great composite store of human knowledge.

On a spring day, about a year ago, as a student in Vienna, I was walking along a narrow street in the neighborhood of the University buildings. The month was April and the air was bright and fragrant with the fulfilled promises of an early spring. Far beyond the skyline of the buildings fleecy clouds were drifting slowly by, while down below and about my path the streets were full of life and newly awakened activity. The whole city, inanimate as well as animate, seemed to be breathing and drinking full and deep of the air and the sunshine, while over all rose the vast and mighty bee-hive murmur which told of work and of the need of daily bread.

The sensations from ear and eye which told me of these surroundings now rest in my memory as the last of the old life and of the external world in which I had lived to that time.

I had come in the course of my walk to a huge new building in the process of erection, and was passing under the exterior scaffolding. Then a horrible shock and a blank.

When next I seemed to awake to consciousness, it was to the quiet and blackness of death — a death, however, in which I could still feel, as the dull pain in my forehead assured me. Then, as

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the impulse to movement came, I put forth my hands and found that I was in bed with seemingly unfamiliar surroundings. I called or tried to, but my voice seemed frozen in the throat, and no sound met the ear in response to the effort. Some one came, however—I felt the jar—and took my hand, felt the pulse and passed a hand over my forehead. Again I spoke, and asked where I was and what had occurred, or at least made the effort, but no voice reached the ear, neither my own nor that of my visitor, in reply. Almost uncertain whether alive or dead, whether in this world or another, I bethought myself of writing, and so made the motion of forming letters with the forefinger on the palm of the hand. My visitor understood and brought what I could plainly feel to be a pencil and pad of paper. Guided simply by the sense of movement I immediately wrote my questions of where? what? how? why? The pad was taken and my questions, I suppose, were read; still there was no reply other than a kindly and soothing pressure of the hand on my head, and an attempt to close my eyes as if to suggest sleep. But I was not to be put off and so wrote on my pad the following: “For *yes* press on the back of my hand once, for *no* press twice.” Then I wrote below: “Do you know the telegraph code?” I felt pressure twice. Then again: “Can you bring me some one who does?”

I felt the pressure once. Then, after a time, there came a jar as of footsteps, and again my hand was taken, while on the back I felt the rippling flow of pressure from a finger forming letters as plainly as though by the familiar click of the telegraph code. It spelled out:

“Do you understand?”

My thought had indeed been divined. I had learned something of telegraphy as an amateur, and the thought of gaining communication with the outside world in this way through the sense of feeling had occurred to me when all other means had failed. Eagerly I replied, and again asked my questions as before. In reply my hand was taken and then the story was tapped off to me as it had happened nearly a month before. I shall not trouble the reader with details. There had been an accident, the scaffolding under which I was at the moment passing had given way, and I had been struck on the head by a falling beam of iron, and taken

unconscious to the hospital. There my life had been despaired of, but in the end a great specialist in brain surgery had been called and had performed an operation which had saved life, but, for the present at least, had left me totally blind and deaf. I shall not try to describe my feelings or the workings of my mind at this information. For those who have lost a sense, such description is quite unnecessary, and for those who have not, no words yet coined would be adequate for the purpose.

Days passed on, though to me light and darkness, day and night were one; but at intervals which I suppose to have been days my operator came and talked with me and enabled me to talk with the surgeons and nurses, and thus to gain contact with the outside world. It appeared, furthermore, that my organs of speech were uninjured, and so, while unable to hear my own voice, I could nevertheless express my thought in ordinary speech, being guided chiefly by a sense of the effort necessary in forming the words. This saved the telegraphy on my part, and made communication so much the simpler and more satisfactory.

On one of these occasions, not long after my return to consciousness, and while I was conversing through my interpreter with the house surgeon, a hope was tapped off to me that possibly I should not be always as I now was; that the great specialist had introduced certain unique features in the course of the operation which he had performed, and that he had expressed the hope that I might some time hear and see. This was the hope held out to me, vaguely and uncertainly expressed, yet it was a straw to a drowning man, and I clutched and held to it as such.

And now I must speak of Thérèse, my betrothed. Of an old Franco-Austrian family, I had met her at the house of a friend scarcely a year ago, and but lately we had made our mutual promises of trust and troth. My last memory of her ran back to the morning of the day on which I had been injured, when I had met her on the street, instinct with youth, life and beauty, and we had parted with plans for a walk together in the late afternoon. Thérèse was fair to the eye and her voice a delight to the ear, and now this wall of physical separation had come between us. Was I never again to hear her voice or see her face? In my first enquiries little time had been lost in asking for Thérèse, if she knew

and could visit me. Yes, I was told, she knew and had already seen me several times before the return of consciousness, and had now been denied only by the orders of the attending surgeon, who feared nervous excitement at the present time. But soon, perhaps to-morrow, she should be allowed to come, and so I awaited the morrow. Then, when a warm, gentle hand was placed over mine and I felt soft lips on my forehead, I knew that Thérèse was there, and for the moment I was content. Then my interpreter came in and we could converse, and I was happy indeed. So one day followed another, but not for long were we content to be dependent on an interpreter, one foreign to our own thoughts and feelings. With the zeal born of love Thérèse had soon mastered the code, and could tap and ripple off messages on my hand, cheek or forehead, and so became my interpreter, nurse and constant comfort.

But what of this hope of the great doctor that some day I might hear and see? It was a hope long deferred, and I should have become heartsick indeed but for Thérèse and the comfort of her presence. Finally, one afternoon about three weeks after my awakening, she was sitting holding my hand, and the western sun, which, as she had told me, was streaming in through the open windows, fell with slanting rays on the pillows near my head. I asked her to turn my face to the window that I might look out. My eyes, it will be understood, were in no way injured, and externally seemed entirely normal. The lack of sight was in the brain, and not in the eye. So she turned my face to the window and I lay wondering how long before some glimmer of light might work its way through to the deadened brain. As I lay thus I began to be conscious of a humming sound, something like a hive of bees; like and still different from any sound I had ever heard. This was the first sensation of hearing of which I had been conscious since my awakening into a world of darkness and silence. Astonished, I quickly turned to tell Thérèse and ask her the meaning of so startling a sensation. As I turned, the humming ceased: Like the passing murmur of a ripple on the beach, it had come and gone, a whisper from the outer world — and then silence. Again I turned my eyes to the window, and again came the mysterious whisper. I closed my eyelids and it ceased — I opened them and it began. With mind bewildered I tried again and again and found that in

some mysterious way the cause of the whisper was the light of the western sun entering my eyes. With expectation tense and tinged almost with foreboding, Thérèse and I talked of the new wonder, and as we talked the sun sank behind the neighboring building and the ghostly whispers ceased.

As the days went by these murmuring whispers became stronger and louder, with differences which I came to associate with changes of light and shade in my surroundings. Still, it was all vague, mysterious and almost oppressive, and I knew not what to think. I had talked with the house surgeon regarding the matter, but he had little to say and only bade me be of good cheer and hope for the best.

Then quickly came another mystery. About a week after my first visit from the sunlight, Thérèse and I were talking regarding indifferent matters, when suddenly I felt a heavy jar, and too clearly for mistake saw a sudden flash of color. It was located nowhere in particular, simply a flash, and it was gone. Eagerly I told Thérèse and asked her regarding the jar. She replied that at the moment an attendant in passing along the hall had slipped, and a heavy tray of dishes which he was carrying had fallen to the floor with a tremendous crash.

This was the beginning of another series of mysterious experiences, and by means which need not be detailed it became clear that in some incomprehensible way loud noises were capable of producing flashes of color sensation. Then, as the days went by, the flashes of light and color began to be more plainly and constantly seen, while on the other hand the ghostly whisperings became likewise clearer and with more of character and individuality. The former were plainly caused by the sounds of footsteps, the rumble of the street, and finally by the human voice; while the latter were as clearly dependent on the light and color which came to my eyes from the world about me. I was, indeed, in a world of wonder and mystery, and but for Thérèse I should have been quite ready to believe that, after all, I had been killed, and was simply waking into a new state of existence. But there is no reason why a more complete explanation should not be given at this point, though it was only after long months that I came into a full knowledge of the facts as detailed below.

The eminent surgeon who had operated upon me was a man who for years had lived with but a single aim in life — the demonstration of certain theories regarding the functions of the brain. He came of a family of physicians and surgeons, and for thirty years had pursued his studies with unvarying and unwearied purpose. He had even come to be considered as almost a monomaniac on the subject of his own pet theories, and it was known that he spent most of his time in making the boldest and most original experiments in these fields of investigation. Those who knew best had even come to shake their heads and to hint that in some of his hospital operations his boldness had overstepped the limits of discretion and caution, and that some of his experiments would hardly bear the light of an official examination. Nevertheless, his skill was admittedly unequalled, and in desperate cases, where his exquisite touch, profound knowledge of the human brain and imperturbable nerve seemed the only recourse offering a ray of hope, he was often called in as the last resort. So in my own case, considered desperate from the first, he was called in as the only one whose skill and special knowledge might offer some little chance for the saving of life and of reason together.

Now, it appears that he had long awaited the opportunity to try an experiment which he believed would throw much light on certain obscure points concerning the operations within the brain. This related to the effect of an interchange between the parts of the brain connected with the optic and with the auditory nerves. That is, he wished to connect the optic nerve, leading from the eye, with that part of the brain which receives its usual stimulus from the auditory nerve, coming from the ear; and, *vice versa*, the auditory nerve, leading from the ear, with that part of the brain which receives its usual stimulus from the optic nerve, coming from the eye. If certain views which he held were correct, he believed that with such a change of relation and with a nerve connection thus set up between the eye and the hearing part of the brain, and between the ear and the seeing part, light in the outward eye would produce the sensation of sound in the brain, and sound in the outer ear the sensation of light in the brain. When I was placed in his hands at the hospital he found both optic and

auditory nerves involved in the brain lesions, though the corresponding brain centres seemed uninjured. Here, then, was the opportunity which he had sought so long. The temptation was sudden and too great to be withstood. I knew long after what he must have suffered mentally while wavering and before he finally yielded and decided to make me thus a victim of his hypothesis. In the readjustment of the parts, then, the change had been made. No one had been the wiser, and hardly expecting that I would recover, he awaited the result.

Poor man! I can bear him no ill-will, for terribly he suffered — far more than I. The charges of idiosyncrasy and monomania were but too well founded, and the dormant brain lesions which his solitary and single-viewed life had helped to develop now rapidly made themselves manifest, and soon after the operation on my head, which was indeed the last of importance which he performed, it was found necessary to place him in the charge of keepers and in an institution where he could be watched and properly cared for. The nervous strain attendant on the operation and the temptation against which he had vainly struggled had doubtless hastened the climax, and he had thus lost the use of his own brain and reason while giving to me life and reason indeed, though with brain faculties so sadly twisted.

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So, to return to the thread of my story, it will be understood, as the days went by and the nerves and brain centres became accustomed to their new relations, that I began to have clear and distinct *sound sensations* caused by the rays of light entering my eyes and thus interpreting to me in terms of sound what for others was a world of light and color. In like manner, I came also to have equally clear and distinct *light* and *color* sensations, caused by sound waves entering the ear, and thus interpreting to me in these terms what to others was a world of sound. I remember especially when words began to take on tints and shades of their own. I first noticed them with my own voice, and then later I remember the joy when I could see the words spoken by Thérèse and thus recognize her voice. Very soon after, I was able to begin to associate the appearance of the word with its meaning, and thus to acquire a vocabulary of visible speech. This

I could do by speaking the word myself and having Thérèse or others do the same, and then noting in each case the essential features of the visible image or appearance. It will be understood that these word visions possessed no form, in the ordinary meaning of the term. They arose from a disturbance in the brain coming from the ear, and not from a picture on the retina of the eye. Nevertheless, they possessed abundance of character to make sure a recognition of their identity and individuality. Color, both in tint and intensity, together with the sequence of change and the duration of the component parts all modified by subtle effects of light and shade, these came soon to speak for me a language no less certain than that which I had known of old by the ear. So likewise with other sounds — the hum of the street, the ticking of the clock, the distant chiming bell — each had its own color value with qualities of light and shade, and so I came to interpret the outside world of sound almost, or in a way, quite as well as formerly by the ear.

So, likewise, with the outside world of light and color. It now spoke to me a new and wonderful language, first of whispers and faint murmuring echoes, and then of sounds, varying in every conceivable manner in pitch, quality and power. While noise, harshness and discord were by no means unknown, this world was for the most part one of music. The full rolling of the organ tone, the tinkling of a distant bell, the song of joy in the throat of a nightingale, the lullaby of a mother to her babe, these are dim suggestions of the world of music in which I lived, and of the message which my outward environment now brought me through the eye. I came also to realize that the external forms of objects were thus determined by their tones or notes. The square of the window with the blue sky beyond, for example, was mapped out by a delicious high-pitched and clear, bell-like tone, while the fleecy clouds as they drifted by would sing me a lullaby like my mother of old. Then, on either side, the darker walls of the room spoke to me in gentle murmurs and subdued tones according to the play of color, light and shade.

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And now the reader will perhaps begin to realize why I find it difficult to describe in ordinary language the sensations through

which the outer world was revealed to me. But let me at least make the attempt, imperfect as it may be. Let me give a glimpse of an hour of my life after the return of physical strength and the full development of my new senses of sight and hearing. The time is about a year later, and Thérèse and I are wed. We are at a hotel in Constance and she has gone out for the moment, leaving me at the western window looking out on the sunset sky. And so as I watch, allowing my eyes to wander over the blazing heavens, I hear mighty harmonies, as of some heavenly symphony. Grand and mysterious the sounds wax and wane with the play of light and change of tint. Now I hear a cloud drifting southward over the sun. The music becomes soft, and I hear gentle melodies as of bells on some far off mountain peak. Then the cloud drifts past and as I am looking near the sun I hear a burst of music, fierce and wild. Startled I turn away, until the eye rests on the cool mountain side with the shepherds and their returning flocks. I have learned to know and love this view, for it sings to me a pastoral, and I look and listen with enchantment to the soft, glad strains of music borne to me on the wings of the light. Then, as the sun declines, I hear the sweet cadences of the shadows as they lengthen and fall over the mountain side and plain.

While I have been gazing thus at the music of the western sky and the distant landscape, the sounds of the street, as they rise to my window on the air, have been painting also for me pictures of light and color. But now I catch a succession of tints which tells me that footsteps are coming, and soon Thérèse enters the room. I turn as she approaches, and where are now the harmonies and melodies of the sunset? Forgotten, and I am listening to the sweetest music ear ever heard as she approaches me with the sunset light falling upon her face. I hear the warm blush of life and love on her cheek; it is a tone which no ears but mine have heard. I hear the love-light in her eyes; it speaks a language which I only can interpret. I hear her golden hair as the sunlight falls upon it, and it whispers to me a lullaby, gentle and sweet.

Then we sit down together and watch the western sky. For me it is the sunset overture, drawing gently to its close; and, finally, as the sun sinks behind the mountain ridge, the earth seems

to sob as with grief, and the fading tints take up the harmony in a minor key and so carry it to its finish in a far away whisper, faint and sweet.

Then we turn, and she tells me of the incidents of her walk. I see the soft, deep tints of her voice and the rich play of color, as her words fade and blend one into another.

Then she sits down at the piano and paints for me a picture, and I see the ebb and flow of the music in a glittering play of color, coruscating and shining with tints and shades, which remind me of the soap-bubble and the rainbow of my former world.

But the mood passes, and we go to the window and look out at the darkening sky. Here and there, as I turn my eyes, I hear a star as a far-off tinkling bell, while the faint earth-light comes up to me as a subdued and dying whisper. Thérèse asks me a question and I see her words as a play of soft prismatic color, while as she turns for my reply, I catch the expression of her face — to me a sweet melody, breathing of love and constancy, and so I am content.



Doctor Goldman.*

BY DON MARK LEMON.



HE diamond would have made Egypt's Queen humble."

"My God, it is Doctor Goldman!" I exclaimed.

Haufman was grasping the table cloth, half dragging it from the table.

"It was at Fehzeh, in the summer of '74."

Haufman blanched at the date.

"I had met Major Putman and one Lieutenant Haufman at Bombay."

I reached across the table and grasped Haufman's arm. I, Major Putman, was sitting with Lieutenant Haufman at a private dining table in a restaurant at New Orleans, while, from the adjoining table, shut from our view by a curtain, came the voice of Doctor Goldman, who was murdered and buried in the summer of '74 at Fehzeh, India. "The diamond would have made Egypt's Queen humble" were the very words he had spoken an hour before we found his murdered body concealed in the brush behind the bungalow of our Indian host.

"Lieutenant Haufman told me of a lost diamond in India," continued the voice; "a stone four hundred and fifty carat fine, the brilliancy of which rivalled that of the 'Pitt.'"

For a moment Haufman leaned against the table and the beating of his heart shook the plates; then he drew back and held up a warning hand. The voice went on:

"I was amazed at Haufman's knowledge of precious stones — in handling them he seemed conversant to his very finger tips — and when he spoke of the great size of the lost diamond I did not discredit him, for his knowledge of precious stones gave support to his words; and, in conclusion, I agreed to fit out an expe-

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* The writer of this story received a cash prize of \$100 in THE BLACK CAT story contest ending March 31, 1900.

dition for the recovery of this lost diamond, Lieutenant Haufman assuring me that he knew the exact spot where the diamond had been lost, and only a lack of funds had kept him from recovering it many months before."

"Haufman," I said, in low and deliberate tones, pointing to the curtain between us and the invisible speaker, Doctor Goldman, "if I were to lift that curtain —"

"No, no, my God, no!" said Haufman starting up.

"If I were to lift that curtain," I repeated, "there would be nothing behind it."

I realized the folly of my words the moment I had uttered them, but they could not be unsaid. My susceptible and high-strung friend had fallen to the floor.

I lifted him up and faced the curtain between me and — the murdered Doctor Goldman — with the Lieutenant in my arms.

"So," continued the voice, "taking Major Putman into the party as a third representative, for he was a brave soldier and there was great danger to be faced, we left Bombay and travelled about one hundred miles north-east to the village of Fehzeh."

Haufman was not unconscious, as I thought, for suddenly he whispered, "He was dead when we found him in the brush, and when we buried him his body had begun to decompose. If you lift that curtain —"

"Haufman, you are unnerved and had better leave this place," I said, realizing how deeply my friend was moved.

"We remained at Fehzeh three days, then Major Putman, Haufman, and myself, accompanied by an Indian youth, left the village and hastened to the ruined temple where the diamond was supposed by Lieutenant Haufman to have been lost. Lost; no, it had never been lost. It had been stolen and concealed there. I realized this the moment I came in sight of the temple, and noticed Haufman's familiarity with the ruins."

"'Tis false," whispered Haufman, "false. I had never crossed the ruins before. False as the cheat behind that curtain. Bah, I was a fool to think him the murdered Goldman. A cheat, a fraud, a trickster, who has stolen the secret facts of that journey, and, apprised of my wealth, seeks to defame my character for gain. I will unveil him with my own hands."

He started forward to lift the curtain, when I checked him. "Did you ever tell any one of our journey to that Indian temple, or its purpose?" I asked.

"Never," he said, drawing back from the curtain.

"Nor did I," I replied, "and Goldman was found murdered a few moments after our return to Fehzeh, making it impossible for any one to have learned of him the purpose of that journey."

"My God," groaned Haufman, with dry lips, "it is Doctor Goldman."

"We had no sooner reached the ruins," continued the inexorable voice, "than a tropical storm broke upon us, almost sweeping us from our feet. Yet, despite the fury of the elements, Lieutenant Haufman quietly called the Indian to his side, fastened a rope about his waist, and bade him descend a narrow excavation beneath the temple and bring therefrom the diamond."

"After a few moments had passed the youth returned. Balancing himself on a shattered pillar he opened his hand. There, in his palm, bare of any wrappings, lay the splendid jewel."

"Then suddenly the diamond glowed like a ball of red fire and, even as we looked, a blue vapor arose from the youth's outstretched hand, and it was empty."

"I started forward, when a sheet of lightning seemed to fall upon my head, and ere I could utter an exclamation the charred and blackened body of the Indian youth fell at my feet."

"One bolt of lightning had consumed the diamond and a second had blasted the youth beyond all likeness to a human being."

It was the murdered Doctor Goldman speaking; there could be no doubt of it now. I turned to Haufman. He was grasping his chair to keep from falling. He paid no attention to me as I went forward and took his arm, but with bent and straining head waited for the words that should come from behind the curtain.

"We took up the Indian's body," continued the voice, "and carried it back to Fehzeh on a litter, veiled from our sight by green boughs dripping with the rain."

"Arrived at the village, Major Putman explained to the natives that the Indian youth had been struck by the lightning, while, at the same time, I drew Lieutenant Haufman aside into the brush back of the bungalow of our host, an Indian physician, and de-

manded an explanation as to his peculiar knowledge of the diamond and the place of its concealment."

Again I looked at Haufman. He was not trembling now, but his whole body was stiff with tension as he bent forward in that intense listening attitude.

"As I questioned Lieutenant Haufman," continued the voice, "he grew insolent, then suddenly demanded to know if I thought that he had stolen the diamond and concealed it in the ruins of the temple. I bluntly replied that I believed him a thief and a trickster.

"Even as I spoke he drew his sword and stabbed me to the heart!"

During the latter part of this speech I had stolen forward to the curtain so as not to miss a word, but now I suddenly wheeled around upon my companion. A terrible light had broken upon me. It was Lieutenant Haufman who was last with Doctor Goldman before his death. It was Lieutenant Haufman who had fixed the crime of murder upon a native, innocent in every eye but his own. Was it Haufman who had murdered Doctor Goldman?

A moment our eyes met, then, half falling across the table, Haufman cried out, "For God's sake, don't lift that curtain."

I turned half around, clutched the curtain, and drew it aside.

The dining-room before us was empty.

No one had left that compartment, yet to make doubly sure I swept aside the curtains about me and looked out into the open aisle of the restaurant.

There was no one there but a colored waiter. I called him to me and enquired who had just retired from the compartment adjoining my own. He stared, and pointed at the table. Then I saw that the table was set, prepared for a guest, and had not been disturbed.

I paid the bill and led Haufman to my hotel. I had never liked the man, though business had long bound us together. However, I would see that he had justice.

Then arose the question, Was Doctor Goldman alive? No; had I not helped to bury him with my own hands after decomposition had set in?

What, then, was I to make of the voice I had heard, and the

speech that could have proceeded only from the lips of the murdered man?

There could be no trick, I well knew, for the knowledge of that journey to Fehzeh and its secret purpose was lodged in but three memories — the memory of the murdered Doctor Goldman, Haufman's and mine, and knowing this I saw no escape from the conclusion that the dead had spoken.

At about ten o'clock that night some one knocked at the door of my room. Haufman started up from the book that he was vainly endeavoring to read and demanded, "Who is there?"

The answer came distinctly, "It is I, Doctor Goldman."

I believe I never saw such horror as was depicted in the countenance of Lieutenant Haufman at these words.

I arose from my chair and softly leapt to the door. Turning my face from the panels so that my voice would seem to one outside to come from a distance, I also demanded, "Who is there?"

"It is I, Doctor Goldman."

Instantly I turned the handle and opened the door. I was confident my visitor would not escape me.

There was no one there and the hallway was empty.

As I stood near the threshold, I distinctly heard some one pass me and enter the room. I wheeled around and filled the doorway with my body to prevent the visitor's egress.

Haufman also had heard the visitor enter and stood in the centre of the room with a painful listening fear in his regard.

Slowly the visitor made the circle of the room, following closely the four walls, but he was invisible to our straining eyes — a horrible presence in our midst and nothing more.

Again he made the circle. We heard his light foot-fall on the carpet and his calm breathing.

He passed me for the second time and again circled the room. What was his purpose? Could it be that he intended to circle Haufman thus through all the long hours of the night? My God, would he hold Haufman in that charmed circle until the unfortunate man was dead of exhaustion or fear!

Once again the unseen visitor circled the room, but this time he did not approach me as closely as before. Was it that he was fearful of my presence? I thought for a moment that he was, and

my courage began to rise, then suddenly I realized the meaning of the change.

Haufman also understood.

The murdered Doctor Goldman was slowly narrowing the circle and approaching his murderer.

When the circle was completed — what then? Would the murdered man stand visible, face to face with Lieutenant Haufman, and condemn him with unsealed lips.

My body grew cold as ice, and I seemed to be chained in the doorway to witness this act of retribution devised and executed by — the dead.

Slowly the circle narrowed; inch by inch the unseen visitor was approaching Lieutenant Haufman. His light foot-falls were like the muffled ticking of a clock that measured out the moments preceding the doom of a man in the chair of execution.

Then he made the last circle and stood before Haufman.

For a moment there was no sound — each had ceased to breathe. Then, slowly and distinctly, from the lips of the unseen visitor, came the words:

“I am the spirit of the murdered Doctor Goldman. Come with me.”

Another moment and the blood seemed to burst from my very finger tips. I rushed forward to where Haufman was standing. His eyes were wide open, staring directly before him — at what?

I touched his arm. He was dead, and in a moment his body fell to the floor at my feet.

For days and days I lay at the home of a friend, raging of Doctor Goldman and Lieutenant Haufman. The tragedy, coupled with malarial poison I had contracted in India, had induced brain fever, and it was fully a month before I was entirely rational.

Then followed a long period of convalescence, during which, day and night, waking and sleeping, I endeavored to solve the mystery that had prostrated me, for I could not bring my mind to believe that the dead had spoken.

But all was in vain, and I realized that the explanation — if the appalling mystery could be explained — must come from outside of myself.

A month after I had quit the home of my friend, I received a

letter bearing the postmark of the English postoffice at Fehzeh. Feverishly breaking the seal, I opened and read the following extraordinary communication:

MAJOR PUTMAN,

Dear Sir: — Lieutenant Haufman, who died at your rooms on the 3d of October last, suffered a just death, and that at the hands of one who both is and is not the murdered Doctor Goldman.

"Strange," you exclaim. Yes, exceedingly strange; but true.

In brief, I myself, an entire stranger to you and no less a stranger to the unfortunate Doctor Goldman, am Doctor Goldman who was murdered at this village in the summer of '74; but I am Doctor Goldman only between the period that Doctor Goldman left Bombay in your company and the company of the treacherous Lieutenant Haufman up to the moment that Doctor Goldman was murdered by the said Lieutenant Haufman.

Since and previous to that time I am and was an American legerdemainist and traveller, and in no way related to Doctor Goldman, the murdered German savant.

At Fehzeh, India, in the summer of '74, I was accidentally shot through the head and lay at the bungalow of an Indian physician, presumably at the point of death.

As I lay unconscious a Doctor Goldman was found murdered and brought to the very house where I was at the time. In the night the Indian physician waiting upon me secretly removed a quantity of the brain substance, tissue and bone from the skull of the murdered Goldman and grafted the wound in my head with the same.

Under the gifted and skilful hands of my Indian physician this extraordinary operation proved a complete success; but, most wonderful of all, when I had fully recovered I found myself endowed with a memory of events outside of my own life; in fact, the memory of the events in the life of Doctor Goldman between the time he left Bombay and the moment of his death.

It was some time before I could realize the meaning of this abnormal memory, but, when I had grasped its full import, I, out of a passionate desire to punish a guilty man, immediately followed you and Lieutenant Haufman to New Orleans, and, by the art of ventriloquism, threw my voice into the dining compartment adjoining yours in that restaurant where I had frequently seen you two Englishmen dine together. Had you lifted the curtain to the right instead of to the left you would have found me in person.

I also threw my voice against your door the night Haufman died, and by the same art of ventriloquism, practised from an adjoining room, seemed to be in your midst.

A part of the brain of Doctor Goldman being grafted to mine, I was endowed with so much memory as was seated in that part, although there is the alternate belief that my Indian physician—by some psychic power unknown in the West—discovered the life of Doctor Goldman between the time he left Bombay and the time of his murder, and hypnotized me with that knowledge, perhaps to use me as an instrument of vengeance against the murderer of the unfortunate Doctor.

After the test in the restaurant, I knew that Lieutenant Haufman was guilty, and so followed him up to his deserved death.

Trusting that this will re-establish your health and bring you peace of mind, I remain, my dear Major Putman, the incarnated memory of Doctor Goldman—and an American legerdemainist and traveller.

C. B.

I tore and burned the letter. Then I deeply regretted it.

The handwriting might have proved to have been that of the murdered Doctor Goldman.



When Time Turned.*

BY ETHEL WATTS MUMFORD.



DROPPED in at my friend Dr. Lamison's rooms, for I had been dull and bored all day, and Lamison, partly by reason of his profession, partly because of his own odd humor and keen insight, is a delightful companion. To my disgust he was not alone, but deep in an animated discussion with an elderly gentleman of pleasant appearance. Being in no mood to talk to strangers I was about to make my excuses and retire, but Lamison signed to me to remain. "Let me present my friend Robertson, Mr. Gage," he said politely, as we both bowed with due formality. "Robertson," he continued, addressing me, "you will be interested in what this gentleman has to say on the Philippines — he has spent some years out there."

Mr. Gage smiled reminiscently. "Yes, I spent some little time in the Islands. In fact, I am just on the point of going there now, and am very sorry I shall not see them again."

"What?" I asked. "If you're going, why do you say you will never see the place again?"

Lamison broke in abruptly. "That is a long story. Let's go on with the question we had in hand. You were saying that the Malays are singularly shrewd and cunning."

Mr. Gage brightened visibly. "They are, indeed. Now, when I was in Manila," — and he launched into a highly instructive lecture on the Malay and all his works, talking rapidly and tersely; his phrases full of vigor and originality, his descriptions vivid and picturesque; in fact, it has rarely been my good fortune to listen to so brilliant a conversationalist — though conversation it could hardly be called, for by common consent he had the floor to himself.

Occasionally I asked a question, or Lamison punctuated the discourse with nods of approval as he flicked his cigar ashes on the floor. From the Philippines we wandered to the Chinese empire

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* The writer of this story received a cash prize of \$125 in THE BLACK CAT story contest ending March 31, 1900.

and its destiny. Gage had spent two years in Tientsin and Hong Kong and was as well informed and interesting as man could be. His observation was phenomenal, and his memory likewise, and he had a way of presenting his facts that was positively evocative. I felt, after listening to him, that the recollections were my own, so distinctly did he force his mental pictures into my consciousness. He was eminently moderate in all his views, avoiding extremes and holding a mean of charity and common sense that is, to say the least, unusual.

A flash of lightning that stared suddenly through the windows, and was followed by a terrific thunder clap, made us start and pause. Mr. Gage arose and, going to the window, looked out into the murky night, remarking as he did so on the suddenness and violence of storms in the tropics.

I seized the occasion to nod to Lamison. "What a brilliant chap," I said. "I never heard a man express himself so well and sanely — who is he, anyway?"

"A gentleman and a scholar, also my guest for the present," my host answered. "So you think him well balanced?"

"Eminently so," I said heartily. "Not many men could state the facts of an international feud with such moderation."

Dr. Lamison smiled a strange, grave smile.

Our companion came back from the window whereon the heavy wash of the rain was now playing, and refilled his glass from the pitcher of shandygaff.

"So you are just on the point of making your first trip to the East?" Lamison asked, to my unutterable amazement.

Gage nodded. "Yes. In a few days I shall have decided."

I looked blankly at him.

"Then I suppose you will have your quarrel with the family by next week?" my friend went on.

Gage sighed deeply. "Yes, I shall have to go through with it again. Fortunately the worst stages come first, and I have been feeling the after effects for some days already."

Lamison looked at my confusion with amusement.

"Tell Robertson about it all, old man," he said. "He is perfectly trustworthy, and yours is such an interesting story. To begin with, tell him how old you are."

Gage laughed, a quick boyish chuckle, and sprang up gaily, stretching himself before the sparkling fire. "Just three and twenty," he answered hilariously.

I looked at him carefully. His iron-gray hair, the infinitesimal tracery of lines that covered his face and hands like a fine-spun web, and the slight stiffness of his joints, in spite of his quick and rather graceful movements, bespoke a man in the later fifties. I understood now. He was doubtless one of the curious cases of mania which the doctor was constantly picking up and studying.

"Tell him how it happened," Lamison suggested.

Gage's face grew grave. "It's very sad, part of it — but on the whole I have been blest above all men, for I have lived my life twice over. It was this way" — he sat down once more in the easy chair from which he had risen. "I was devotedly fond of my wife — one of the most charming women in the world, Mr. Robertson; but I lost her. She died, very suddenly, under singularly painful circumstances." His mouth twitched, but he controlled himself. "I was away on business in Washington when the news of her sudden illness reached me. I waited for nothing, but left by the first train. I remember giving ten dollars to the driver of the cab I hailed on my arrival, if he would reach my house in ten minutes. Aside from that the journey is only a blur of strain and horror. My memory becomes clear again with the moment when I saw my doorstep, wet and shining in the rain. I noted the reflected carriage lamp on the streaming pavement. The servant who opened the door at the sound of the stopping of my cab was crying. The house was brilliantly lit and I could hear hurried footsteps on the floor above and catch a glimpse of the blue-clad figure of a trained nurse. I rushed upstairs and into my wife's room. She raised one hand feebly toward me, and a flash of recognition lit up her face for an instant and then faded into waxen blankness. I can't describe that hour — it is too keenly terrible for me to repeat and it is not necessary to the story. At last it was all over, and her dear eyes closed forever, as I thought then. A great emptiness settled upon my brain and heart. Then came a slow tightening and straining sensation somewhere inside the dome of my skull, that seemed as fast as St. Peter's. A snap, sharp as a broken banjo string and perfectly audible, was its

climax. Then I steadied myself and looked about. Nothing had changed. The room was still, for the others had gone and we were left alone together — my wife and I. The silence was awful. Only the clock ticked louder and louder and louder till it beat like a drum. Then I glanced at the timepiece, an ordinary little porcelain thing that my wife kept by her on the medicine table, and a cold fear gripped me as I looked, for I realized that something wonderful and terrible was happening. With each tick the second hand jerked one second *backwards* — the hands were moving around the clock face from right to left. I started, and almost at the same instant I felt the hand I held in mine grow relaxed and warm. I gave a cry. The door opened. The nurse, who had been the last to leave the chamber of death, came in. I saw her do exactly what she had done before — but reversed. Then my sister backed in from the opposite side, exactly as she had walked out, and turning, showed me her tear-stained, convulsed face with the very movement with which she had left us. The others came in; it was a strange phenomenon. The doctor was there now, standing at the head of the bed. I looked at the clock. It was ticking and the hands slowly turning backwards. All at once I realized what had happened. Time had turned.

“I gasped when the thing dawned on me, it was so stupendous. But I saw my sweet wife’s eyelids flutter, I saw her breath coming with difficulty, and I suffered once more with all my soul that terrible death agony. She turned toward me and lifted her hand with the gesture I had seen as I entered the room. In spite of myself I rose, and left her. I went down the stairs — the servant was there — I passed out into the street, to find the cab that had brought me standing before the door. I backed in. The horse trotted backward all the way to the station and I found myself on the train speeding backwards to the city I had left to come post haste to my darling’s bedside.

“My reason shivered in my skull. If I could not sift this matter I knew I should go mad. The thing was strange past all endurance. So I sat in the train that was carrying me over the miles so recently covered, and considered. A dawn of delight came to me. It would not be so long before all this horror would have doubly passed. I would have to go to the hotel and receive

that terrifying, crushing telegram announcing Isabelle's illness once more. Then I should go over the business that had called me on to Washington, but after that I should go back to my wife to find her strong and well, to live over again the happy years of our married life, to watch her growing daily younger, while I grew young with her. What matter that little tiffs re-occurred—they were so few, and the joy of those years so infinitely great. And that, Mr. Robertson, is just what happened."

He went on, after a pause, in which he seemed lost in happy reverie. "In a week I had grown somewhat accustomed to doing over again the things I had done, only reversed; it seemed almost a matter of course; and, after all, I cared little, for I knew I was soon going to find Isabelle, to be greeted by her good-bye kiss, the same with which she had bid me Godspeed on the fatal journey. I could hardly hold my impatience as, at last, I backed up to the house, and when I saw her standing on the porch as I had last seen her, well and strong, dressed in the pretty gray cloth so becoming to her bright complexion and copper-colored hair, I could have cried with joy. She greeted me as I expected, with good-byes, but my heart sang with delight as we went into the house together. I put down my dress-suit case, and we ate luncheon together, beginning with dessert and ending with the delicate omelette she had prepared herself, in honor of my unusual freedom to lunch with her. We went over our old conversations. I was longing to tell her of my delight in her presence, of my gratitude for the extraordinary reversal of nature that gave her back to me, but I could not, I was under bondage of the past. I could only say what I had said, do what I had done.

"Luncheon over—or rather, correctly speaking, before it had begun—I bade her good-bye in my heart, but greeted her in my speech and went down to the treadmill round of my office work. My recent bereavement made me so tender of her presence, so hungry for the sight of her that my very soul longed to expand itself in loving words and acts; I yearned to do and say a thousand affectionate things, but I could only do as I had done. I began to appreciate how I had let our relations become commonplace, and I hated myself for it. I saw a thousand ways in which I could have made her happier, or spared her pain, yet I could not

take advantage of my new realization of my love of her. Ah, it takes such an experience as mine to make a man understand what he has missed and what he might have been. But even if I could not be to her what I so dearly longed to show myself, yet in my heart no gesture of hers went unnoted, no tone of her voice unloved. She delighted me wholly and completely, and the caresses that I gave her in seeming perfunctoriness, and the words seemingly mere habits of expression, were really the outlet of my soul's yearning to her. We were very happy. For years we were constantly together, and never was wife so appreciated. Then a great fear began to grip my heart. I remember it came suddenly, in the very midst of the little feast we were having to celebrate the first year of our wedded life — our 'first anniversary.' I realized that soon, in the very joy of our honeymoon I must anticipate our separation — the wedding would take place, next we would be engaged, then mere acquaintances, and after that — oh, desolation — it would be before I met her, and I should never see her again.

"I lived that year, our second honeymoon, and the last of our life together, torn between the joy of my returned happiness and the terrible knowledge of my coming loss. The wedding day came and I could have cried out in my agony, but I could give my pain no voice. I had no tears, only smiles and laughter that must be gone through with, though my heart was breaking. Imagine it if you can, sirs. Was ever a man so tried? Then came the period of our engagement, when I knew we were drifting slowly and surely apart — and the happiness and misery of that time was, perhaps, the hardest of all to bear, even worse than the actual slow separation, though after my declaration, when our relations were formal and distant, it broke my heart to see her, whom I had loved so long, treat me as a mere acquaintance; and with it was the awful knowledge that there was no future hope, no possibility of our meeting, on this earth at least. The poignant day of my first meeting with her arrived at last. I saw her, as I had seen her then, so many years before, lighting that conventional ballroom with her presence, a radiant vision, all gold and rose, her tall, graceful figure gowned in soft, filmy drapery. I saw her with all my heart and soul, with all the pent-up memories of my twice lived life, for I remembered it was the first, and

knew it was the last time I should see her. She vanished and I was left alone. For some time afterwards, although I was living over my cheerful, happy-go-lucky bachelor days, I was internally of a suicidal turn of mind, even on my return journeys in the East. I could not resign myself to losing this girl that, according to reversed time, I had never met. But youth is gay, and its recuperative powers strong, and I am growing steadily younger, you see. Then, too, other loves came and went, or rather went and came, and in spite of myself I am able to contemplate my double past with the buoyancy of my second youth. Yet it is all very strange, and recently unaccountable intervals have intruded into my life, such as this evening, for instance. You, gentlemen, are not a part of my boyish past, and yet you seem to be interpolated into my otherwise coherently backward existence. This has been happening for some time, and grows more marked. You may be dreams of my old life that I had forgotten, but I am at a loss to account for it fully. For instance—how could I have foretold then what the future had in store? and yet in one sense that is what I am doing now, in telling you my experience. You must admit that it is confusing.”

Gage’s story had fairly made me dizzy. I admitted that it was confusing. I hardly knew what to think. I even turned an anxious eye on the clock over the fireplace to assure myself that its hands still moved from left to right. As I faced it, Lamison regarded me with his amused but sympathetic eye.

“I hope to interpolate myself a great deal into your world, Gage,” he said. “It’s time you stopped in your mad career of growing younger. I don’t want you on my hands when you become a troublesome stripling, or even when you have to unlearn your college education.”

Gage laughed. “It will be rather hard, but I did enjoy my Harvard days, before I had that row with the family. Whew! How the old man did blow me up! And when I think I have to hear all that over again, it makes me sick.” He paused again, and assisted his courage from the cheering pitcher. “Another thing that worries me,” he went on, “is this: Have you noticed that, although all the happenings of my life seem to follow in well ordered reverse sequence, what I *say* does *not*? For instance,

by all rights I should repeat my sentences verbatim backwards. 'I am glad to see you,' in reversed language would be, 'You see to glad am I.' Now, in all my years of reversed experiences, although the order of conversation progresses backwards, the sentences themselves make perfect forward sense. This drives me to distraction."

The whole impossible proposition danced before me, but Lamison was evidently delighted.

"Good! Gage, splendid! You are making progress — your logic is returning. I am unspeakably glad."

Gage looked at him wonderingly. "Why should you? It is only more confusing. Ah, well, I should not be unhappy if it were not for the awful prospect of being a baby again. That revolts me, like becoming senile. It is such a horrible thing to become a squirming, senseless infant — it makes me shiver, it keeps me from sleeping, it is a menace too ugly and loathsome to be endured. Fancy it, gentlemen, the ignominy of it — the hideous helplessness."

"We'll find a way to prevent that," Lamison said soothingly. "You are better already. It won't be long before we set it all straight. Come, come, be a man —" for Gage suddenly flung himself on the table, his face buried in his hands, moaning slowly,

"I don't want to be a baby — I don't want to be a baby."

This exhibition was so pitiful that I turned to Lamison, almost with tears in my eyes. "Is there any hope for him?" I asked.

Lamison nodded. "Yes, he'll pull through. A condition brought on by overwork and the sudden death of his wife, of whom he was devotedly fond. You see how he is beginning to realize the discrepancies in his imaginary life. He will come out all right — in time."

Gage now had himself under control and sat up shamefacedly.

"Don't mind me, Mr. Robertson," he said. "I don't often break down this way, and I wouldn't have you imagine for one instant that I regret my life. I could not have asked a greater boon of Fate than those happy years restored to me, when time had turned."

He rose gravely, excused himself and left us, and we sat silent and deeply thoughtful, staring into the red embers of the fire.

The Phantom Dromedary.*

BY HENRY ADELBERT THOMPSON.



SUFI was a queer companion for an ex-Connecticut Yankee. He was undoubtedly an Oriental, but whether Persian, Arab or Turk I never knew. He spoke excellent English and gave many evidences of being an educated man. From his physical vigor and ability to bear severe labor and hardship I would have judged him a young man; but the grizzled hair and beard, the peculiar leanness which comes only with age, and, most of all, the face lined and furrowed like the serrated sides of an extinct volcano, marked him as one who had long passed the half-century mile-stone. We met in Ehrenburg when that was a thriving placer town. I soon found that Sufi knew considerable about mining and that he was a faithful and efficient workman. That was enough to satisfy me and, as life in the West discourages the asking of impertinent questions concerning the past history of one's acquaintances, I made no further inquiry and Sufi vouchsafed no further information.

We prospected and mined together for seven years, travelling about the whole southwestern mineral belt. Beyond a fair living, our discoveries did not amount to much. At last, in the Eagle Tail Range in southern Arizona, we found a ledge of gold-bearing ore which promised liberal remuneration for the expense and labor of development. This vein was three feet in average width and extended fully a mile along the summit of a rough spur, which pushed out into the desert to eastward. We built an arastra, the power to operate which was furnished by our burros, and, even with this primitive method of reduction, extracted gold in paying quantities.

One evening about nine o'clock — we had been four months in the place — Sufi picked up the pail and started to the spring, a

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couple of hundred yards from the camp. In a few minutes he came running back, without the pail, breathless, trembling and speechless with fear.

"Why, Sufi!" I cried, "what on earth is the matter?" His lips moved convulsively in the effort to reply, but no word could he utter. Then, writhing and contorted as if with an epileptic fit, he fell to the ground. I seized a canteen and forced some water down his throat, bathed his forehead, chafed his hands and finally succeeded in quieting him in some degree.

"What has happened?" I asked again. "What did you see?"

"Chu — Chu — Chushah!" he gasped. "The dromedary! And She was on it. It's a ghost, Mayhew."

"A dromedary! A ghostly dromedary!" I echoed in amazement. "Why, man, you're crazy! And who is 'She'?"

"I — I — I saw it," he stuttered. "It came for me. I am a lost man!" And he relapsed into incoherent mutterings in a language I did not understand.

It then occurred to me that Sufi had possibly caught a glimpse of one of the wild camels that roam the unfrequented portions of the desert of southern Arizona and northern Mexico, and I said as much to him. But he refused to accept such an explanation. It took me half an hour to subdue his excitement so that he could arise and walk about. Then I offered to go to the spring and get the pail.

"Don't leave me alone, Jack," he cried, in a fresh paroxysm of terror. "Don't leave me, I beg of you. Use the water in the canteens; that will be enough until morning."

I turned back, yielding to Sufi's entreaties, and insisted that he should go to bed at once. He did so, but I do not believe he slept half an hour during the night. I was confounded beyond measure by my companion's conduct. All I could get out of him was that he had seen a phantom camel, ridden by a phantom woman, striding across the plain near the entrance to the little gorge in which the spring was situated. As to who the woman might be, I could not elicit from him the slightest information. Again and again I thought over the strange occurrence after Sufi had retired and I sat by the campfire, smoking my pipe. I knew him to be an unusually courageous man. Once when I had wounded a large puma

and the shell stuck in my rifle, Sufi stopped the infuriated animal's charge with a knife thrust. At another time he calmly faced a desperate gambler who was threatening to shoot him, and dared his antagonist to do his worst. I had seen him tried in a score of ways and did not believe he knew the meaning of fear; yet here he was, shaking and chattering at the fancied sight of a phantom. It might be the outcropping of a latent superstition, inherited from his Oriental ancestry; but this hardly explained the uncontrollable terror he had manifested, for I could not remember that my comrade had ever shown any of the ordinary symptoms of that uncivilized weakness. That he might have seen a wild camel was entirely possible, since they had been frequently reported in that section of country. But why should he clothe flesh and blood with apparitional characteristics? I began to fear that his mental balance was affected, and this conclusion, for want of a better, remained with me for some time.

The next morning Sufi was more than usually silent and distraught. He parried my questions petulantly, and then abruptly.

"Look here, Mayhew," he said finally. "I must have been mighty nervous last night. I imagined I saw the ghost of one who called up unpleasant recollections and whom I desire to avoid. It may have been the result of the heat of the day, or a sudden fit of some kind. I don't want to discuss the matter any further."

I was far from being satisfied with the lame explanation, especially as it was late autumn and the days were comparatively cool, but there seemed to be no alternative to dropping the subject. My comrade did not recover his usual spirits for days. He had always been a man of few words, and was now less than ever given to speech. But he worked as hard and as intelligently as before, and, to some extent, the matter faded from my mind.

Nearly two months passed and the time approached for one of us to go to Fort Yuma, seventy-five miles distant, for supplies. It was Sufi's turn, and he saddled one of the burros and rode away, leading the other. We bade each other a cheery farewell and I turned to my work.

On the evening of the ninth day thereafter, expecting Sufi's return, I sat up somewhat later than usual. I was uneasy

about him, for the journey customarily consumed a less period of time. The thought kept haunting me that I should not have allowed him to go alone. What if he had experienced a recurrence of the mania, for that I now believed it to have been, and was wandering aimlessly about on the desert or lying dead in some arroyo? Eleven o'clock came. I walked out on the trail and looked to southward. The moon was shining brightly, and objects were clearly visible at a considerable distance. As I stood scanning the horizon line for sight of some moving object, there arose, away off on the white, dusty pathway, a screech of mortal fright, followed by an awful, moaning cry. Hurrying to the tent, I seized my rifle and dashed in the direction from which the sound had come. Within two hundred yards I met the two burros, with full packs, plunging wildly toward the camp, and braying in a perfect abandonment of fear. They passed me like a shot. I sped on, hardly daring to conjecture what had happened, but trying to convince myself that the cry was that of a mountain lion. It did not occur to me that if such were the case I should almost certainly have heard the crack of Sufi's Winchester.

After a run of nearly half a mile, I came upon my partner, lying face downward in the trail, and apparently lifeless. Turning him over, I chafed his hands and endeavored to restore his respiration. In a few minutes he gasped once or twice, and then opened his eyes.

"Sufi, speak to me!" I demanded. "What is the matter with you?"

"Has it gone?" he asked, staring wildly around.

"Yes, it has gone," I replied; "but what scared you so?"

"Chushah, the dromedary! She waved a bloody knife at me!" Then he slowly raised himself to a sitting posture and looked me in the face. "Mayhew," he continued, "I am a doomed man. Help me to camp, and I will tell you all about it."

I assisted him to his feet, and he staggered along, leaning on my shoulder. Before he reached the tent, however, he was walking erect and unaided. We found the two burros close to the camp fire, and still snorting and quivering with fright. After unpacking them I turned to Sufi, who was seated upon a box, and leaned forward with his head in his hands.

"Come, old man, cheer up and tell me what is the trouble," I urged. For several minutes he made no answer and then, lifting his head, he regarded me doubtfully.

"Give me a drink of water," he pleaded. He drank deeply, and settled himself against one of the packs before again speaking.

"Mayhew," remarked the unfortunate man, at length, in a hesitating manner, "you and I have been comrades for many years. We have stood by each other in numerous tough places and amid countless hardships. I love you as I love no other man. You know me and yet you don't know me; for what I am about to tell you will make you loathe and despise me. Do not interrupt me, please," he continued, as I opened my lips to speak. "The story will out; I can keep it no longer. It has gnawed at my soul the full length of your life. I only ask that you judge me as leniently as possible; but I fear you will have nothing to do with me when you have heard me through.

"Nearly forty years ago an agent of the United States Government came to Egypt, where I was living, to purchase camels for use in the southwestern part of his country. It was thought that these animals, when acclimated, would prove valuable for transport and dispatch service on the arid plains and over the waterless deserts. I was acting as chief dragoman for the tourist parties of a steamship company, and when the emissary of your government, who was a young army officer, asked to be directed to some man who could assist him in the selection and purchase of the camels, he was referred to me. I was well qualified for the position he offered me, being familiar with the pedigree, speed and endurance of every herd of dromedaries from the Delta to the White Nile, and between Suakim and the Great Desert. My employer engaged to pay me a much larger salary than my situation as dragoman afforded; and it was also a part of our contract that I should accompany him to the United States, and care for the camels.

"I spent some two months in selecting the beasts, being careful to buy only the best, speediest and strongest young animals. No dromedaries in Egypt or the Soudan compared with those owned by Sheik Abdul Raman, of Salimah, a squalid Arab encampment situated one hundred and fifty miles southwest of the Second Cataract. I was especially anxious to secure the finest camel in the Sheik's

herd, desiring to use him for breeding purposes. This young male, named Chushah, "The Speedy," was famous throughout the region where his kind were beasts of travel and burden. The Arabs are careful to preserve record of the lineage of their dromedaries, as of their horses; and, while their stud books are seldom committed to writing, every true son of the desert can recite the pedigree of the animal which he rides, even though it be a long one. Chushah's ancestral tree antedated the Hegira.

"I visited Salimah, and was cordially received by the Sheik, for the Chief Dragoman was a person of consequence in those days. But, when I suggested my desire to purchase Chushah, he indignantly, and even abusively, declined to part with the Pride of the Encampment. Had his refusal been couched in more respectful terms, I would probably have gone my way without further attempt to acquire possession of the coveted beast. Among the Arab people there is no law so strong as that of hospitality. I had eaten of the Sheik's bread and salt, and felt myself entitled to respectful treatment; but when, disregarding the claims of a guest, he reviled me as if I were naught but one of the common fellaheen, my gorge rose at the insult offered by this petty chieftain of a score of black tents. I was a proud man; and with men of my race, vengeance is regarded almost as a sacred duty. The Sheik had a daughter, named, like the prophet's favorite, Ayesha. She was the belle of her tribe, although that is not saying much for her beauty. I have seen countless women, not alone in Cairo and Alexandria, but in Bedouin villages, who surpassed Ayesha in personal appearance. But she served my purpose; and since she had gone out of her way, on my first arrival, to flout me publicly and gratuitously, I had little compunction in using her to accomplish revenge for the combined affronts of parent and child. Being, to a degree, master of my own time, I determined to win the affections of the girl, and, with her assistance, escape from Salimah on the back of Chushah, aware that he would soon outstrip all pursuit.

"In my capacity of guide for tourist expeditions, I had learned many things; among others, something of the ways of women. Therefore, notwithstanding the fact that Ayesha had at first scorned me, I soon ingratiated myself with her. It was the old

story of the rustic maiden and the man from the city. First, in the evening circle within her father's tent, where the men smoked and recited the old traditions while the women, behind the curtains, listened in silence, and then, in stolen interviews such as only feminine *finesse* can arrange, I dinned into her inexperienced ears strange tales of the delights of Cairo, Alexandria, Constantinople and the distant country beyond the seas. I made her believe my position in America would exceed, in power and riches, that of Egypt's ruler. A desert wooing progresses quickly; and, in less than two weeks, she consented to drug the camel guard, mount the swift dromedary, which was docile to her hand, and meet me on an appointed night.

"The scheme worked admirably so far as the meeting was concerned. I had no intention, however, of taking the silly girl with me, having determined to leave her behind, with a perfectly clear statement of my reason for adopting such a course. But I underrated her acuteness. She must have suspected a possible trick; for, when I attempted to mount the camel without her, she was quick and clung to me, fighting with the desperation of a cornered animal. Her strength and fury proved so great that I could not readily throw her off. I would, of course, have mastered her in a short time, had not her lusty screams attracted the attention of some passing travellers, who, answering the appeal for aid, spurred their horses in our direction. My rage and disappointment knew no bounds at this serious balk; for, should the relief party catch me, I knew my life would not be worth a copper. Finally, as Ayesha grasped my sheath knife, I wrenched it from her hand and plunged it into her neck. Then, mounting Chushah hastily, I sped away, just as the belated rescuers bore swiftly down upon the scene of the conflict.

"They halted a moment where Ayesha lay, and then, with wild fury, spurred their horses in pursuit. But I was already nearly half a mile distant, and mounted upon the most rapid racing camel the Nile Valley knew. Their animals were wearied with a day's ride over the hot sands; mine was fresh, and after a slight gain by the first spurt, they rapidly receded in the moonlight. All night the tireless dromedary hastened northward. When day broke, I was so far away as to be fully assured of pres-

ent safety. Late that afternoon I took my steed aboard the fast sailing vessel which was awaiting me at a predetermined point on the river. The boat made good time, having both wind and current in its favor, and I landed at Alexandria without further incident. The nomad tribes of Upper Egypt were never on the best of terms with the government; in fact, they preferred to keep as far away from governmental interference as possible. I had, therefore, little fear of judicial investigation and well-merited punishment.

The anger I felt at the Arab chief and his daughter, and my satisfaction at evening the score with them both, soon subsided, being replaced by the abject slavery of an accusing conscience. Day after day the screams of the murdered girl rang in my ears. Night after night her prostrate body was present to my mental vision; and I could see the bloody dagger lying on the sand beside her. I fell into abstracted moods, neglected my duty, and received many sharp reproofs before the vessel was loaded with its animate cargo. In fact, I think the agent of the United States would have discharged me before sailing had I not pulled myself together by a strong effort of will. The voyage to America was uneventful, and the camels were landed in Texas, where arrangements had been made for their acclimatization.

The scheme, however, failed. Many of the animals died, some escaped or were turned loose by the soldiers, who seemed to have an ineradicable prejudice against their use. This attitude on the part of the men was the real cause of the abortion, since it resulted in lack of that attention and care which were essential to success. I have never lost faith in the feasibility of the project if it were properly managed. That my confidence is justifiable seems to be proven by the fact that, as you are well aware, the camels which escaped have since drifted westward to the southern part of this territory, measurably adapted themselves to the changed conditions of food and climate, propagated their kind, and are occasionally seen, even to this day. The enterprise was finally abandoned and the remnant of the herd sold to showmen.

"My occupation was now gone; and, with some money in my pocket, I started for California to engage in mining. With the character of my subsequent life you are familiar. Time has taught

me to school the outward man to impassivity; but never, since that fatal night, has the inward man been granted a moment's peace. I was trained in Islam, the central principle of which is kismet — fate. Twice, as you know, the phantom of Ayesha, mounted on the swift dromedary, Chushah, which was let go by a soldier shortly after landing in this country, has appeared to me. It will come a third time — and then I shall die or be obliged to depart with it." Sufi paused a moment, looking out into the night with unseeing eyes. Then he resumed, "I beg of you, Mayhew, if you will deign to speak to me at all, not to argue the case. I know my destiny, and avoidance of it is impossible; it is the will of Allah."

I hardly knew what to think of Sufi's narrative. Its truthfulness I did not for a moment doubt. It was not difficult to comprehend how a man, habituated by birth and education to the semi-barbarous standards of morality held by the nomads of North Africa, could, while smarting under contemptuous insult, adopt his plan for the accomplishment of vengeance. And I was too familiar with the passion-born tragedies of Western frontier life to be surprised at the fatal *dénouement* which attended the execution of my comrade's plot.

But how to account for his persistent hallucination concerning the camel and the murdered woman? The conviction grew upon me that Sufi's mental balance, through long, brooding remorse for the awful deed of his younger days, had become unhinged. And yet, there were no other indications of such a condition. Then, too, the wild fright of the burros was not accounted for on that explanation. However, I reflected that if one of the wild dromedaries, roaming the region in which we were dwelling, had suddenly appeared close to the pack animals, they would be exceedingly likely to take severe fright. I was aware that supernatural appearances are frequent delusions of disordered brains; and, in the light of all the data, I determined to treat my comrade as if nothing had happened; but to watch him closely for any further signs of nervous breakdown.

Sufi seemed grateful for my friendly treatment, but, when he mentioned the subject at all, which was seldom, he expressed himself as resigned to the inevitable reappearance of Ayesha and the

accompanying doom for him. His physical health was unimpaired, and no amount of persuasion could induce him to in the least abate his full share of the daily duties. Indeed, he worked harder and longer than ever before, apparently finding in labor a relief of mind. In this way two months passed, and I was beginning to believe my comrade's mental condition improved. We both now refrained from any reference to the dramatic occurrences which had eddied the even flow of our usually quiet life.

One day, in the bottom of the shaft which we were sinking, we struck a pocket of exceptionally rich ore. It was dark at the bottom of the hole and we always used candles. Somewhat excited by our discovery, we worked later than usual; and, on climbing the ladder, found the moon shining and the night two hours advanced. As the rope of the windlass had become frayed during the day's work, I stopped to remove it from the roller, that it might be taken to camp and the broken strands spliced. By the time I had released, coiled and shouldered the line of hemp, Sufi had reached the base of the ridge and was traversing the little strip of plain which intervened between the hill and our tent. Suddenly, clearly defined in the moonlight, which was flooding mountain and desert with a silvery radiance, a stately dromedary issued from the mesquit timber near my comrade.

I could plainly discern the draped female figure which sat upon the back of the camel and directed its course. With long, swinging strides the animal approached the fated man. On reaching him, the woman leaned down from her lofty seat, and, seemingly with one hand, lifted Sufi to the saddle before her. The rapid, undulating pace of the tall Chushah was in nowise diminished by this movement. Absolute silence pervaded the scene as, a minute later, the three disappeared among the trees to southward.



The Footsteps of Fear.*

BY FANNY KEMBLE JOHNSON.



ALL his life Herrick had heard them, as every other man may hear them if he stops to listen. The trouble with Herrick was that he had stopped too often and listened too long. Now, if one waits until they come too close, it is difficult to distance them again, and if one listens until they ring too clearly there is no sound in the world, not even the whisper of a woman, that can ever again quite drown them. And the worst of it is that no man can face this Fear — that, however the bravest man may turn, it is always from behind that he hears the steps which follow as if a coward fled.

All men do not hear them — only the exceptional may, or the man exceptionally situated. Herrick happened to be both. Many men have bequeathed to them an inheritance of death; but Herrick had also an inheritance of perfect loneliness. His people were all at peace in the graveyard plots belonging to the different health resorts of two continents, and he had lived alone since a lad in an old house haunted by their portraits, and their names on the flyleaf of every book from which he learned life. Herrick was not a coward; but one day he locked up the house, and went out through the green old garden. At the gate he looked back.

“I was born in you,” he said to his home, “and if the girl I love didn’t have to drag over Europe with an invalid mother, I would live in you, because you are next door to her, and make the most of my time. But I won’t stay by myself — and maybe I’ll never see you again.”

He looked away for a moment to the war-defaced college buildings on the low green hills beyond. They had been home, too. He hesitated, and a blush rose to his face. Then he kissed his hands to it all with the impulsive gesture of a child, and turned his back on his too quiet past.

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In the station by the river he bought a ticket to the biggest and noisiest city in his native State, which was a Southern one. We will omit the intermediate stages. Enough that in a month he had been able to fulfil his intention of getting a position on one of the biggest and noisiest papers in that city.

He reasonably argued that a reporter on night duty with a six-hour margin of daylight would not have much time in which to lie awake listening, and having an income, he could afford this hypothesis. Herrick was after mental excitement, and he got it. For the first time he was really taken out of his own brain-life and into the lives of others. That was a good result to begin with. His ancestors were the same short-lived set of idiots, and the footsteps sauntered as cynically as ever on his trail. But he had not time to consciously listen, or to fret over the selfishness of the girl's mother, who doubtless heard footsteps hunting her down, too, poor thing! or to write minor poetry, which is the silliest thing a grown-up man with an intellect can do — unless he can sell it. He had only time for his work and he found out that he was good at it. He also found out that six hours of midday when one slept was worth a night of ten hours to lie awake and listen in, and that only crazy people may safely cultivate their imaginations. Therefore, he endeavored to confine his attention to his daily work and to let his ancestors alone. On the whole, he succeeded. Every morning, with his brain at its busiest, he wrote the pages that went to make up his Saturday letter to the girl he loved. When that was done he ran down, all in a minute, it seemed. Sometimes he dropped his head on the letter and went to sleep. Oftener he reeled to the bed, and fell on it, the daylight on his eyelids, black night beneath them. He had not leisure to think of himself at all. But there was a drawback to this. It was good for his mind, but it was not always good for his body. Sometimes a trivial seeming cough worried at his throat for days, and sometimes neuralgia gripped with a clutch not to be loosened except with red hot whiskey. Usually, however, he was deadened to these discomforts. His consciousness was filled with other things — the tearing hurry and devious devices of his work — its crowds, and candidates, and confessions — its murders and its marriages. And there were storms of music — there were civic ban-

qu岸ts — there were noted divines under whom he catnapped in the galleries of the first churches. But better than all these were the thousand special and individual occurrences that took his breath away, and made his flesh glow with the discoverer's rapture. He had lived so among books for his twenty-six years that he had not known before that things which had never been put into books ever happened.

Once, while musing under a noted divine, he got to thinking over this.

"What stories I could write!" he cried to himself. He sat there staring at the speaker, but saw him no more than he saw the red and gray Saint John, or the blue Mary Mother in the triple-arched casement behind the pulpit. He went to Heaven and tasted power, and then, as usually happens, Fate, to get even with him, reminded him of his limitations, and through the open window behind him he heard the footsteps. It was the pause for the long prayer. Herrick bent forward, leaning his cheek against his arm. It was as if bone grazed bone. After five minutes he began to feel that the steps would enter the church if he sat there longer — so near they were — so loud. He hurried out in the middle of the prayer. It was a winter morning, but in that Southern city it was like early spring. The grass in the square was green, and a border of white violets had hastened to bloom. It was Friday, and he gathered a few of them for her Saturday letter. He stood for a moment holding them, conscious only of the sunshine. It deadened him to himself again. It filled the city as wine fills a cup, with a life-giving, sense-stealing potency. But even in the sunshine the cough nagged him. "Listen," it whispered.

"You need a rest," said Herrick's mind to his body, "or you won't last even your time. I've been going too fast for you, curse you! but I've had such a good time."

He looked at his arm with disgust.

"I couldn't row a mile with you," he said. "I would be ashamed to go inside any gym with you. You would have let that tough knock me down last night if I hadn't had a pistol along to help you. Oh, I suppose you do need a rest, only you can't have it, you know. I shan't go back home and wait — by

myself. And I'm not brute enough to take her back, now — even if her mother would kindly die and give me the chance."

He went on through the sunshine with his violets, and climbed to his room, and wrote his daily letter, shutting the flowers up in the thin sheets for her to dream over. Then he slept, and when he awoke it was time to go down to the office and read copy until midnight. After that he was detailed to the city jail, where a death watch was going on.

Herrick was conscious of being wound up to go by the time he came to this part of the programme. The sensation was pleasant after the weakness of the morning. He did not care where his strength came from so long as it did come on demand. The night had turned cold and damp when he went out into the street. The sea wind blew the sea fog down his throat until he strangled, and stopped trying to talk to Griggs, who had been told off with him.

"It's a nasty job," said Griggs, who had leanings toward a counting-room clerkship, and who hated his place.

"Oh, shut up!" rejoined Herrick, trying to speak without breathing, and failing. "What do you know about it?"

"More than I like to," retorted Griggs, good temperedly.

Herrick spoke as effectively as a man could with his mouth shut; but when they halted at their destination he forgot his irritation, and he forgot Griggs. He stood as if alone, listening to a negro chorus that rose and sank — a death-wail that might have turned the heart of Ajax to running water — that might have melted to milk the bones of Achilles.

In ten minutes, perhaps, Herrick roused from a trance, and discovered that he had somehow got himself admitted into the immense vaulted corridor. It was pitch dark at either end; but midway down, in a glaring ring of gaslight, a half circle of swaying negroes, drunk with death and song, clasped hands before an open cell door. Within the cell two black forms flattened themselves out on the stone floor, and grovelled and moaned. The jailer crouched near Herrick and cried out of pure nervousness, and at his elbow was Griggs, shaking like grain when the earthquake tremor runs. Herrick hardly noticed him. It was on his nerves, too. He had watched men die; but it was the first time he had watched men who were afraid to die — men who had

stopped for the last time to listen, not vaguely, but with mathematical certainty, to the footsteps of their Fear. Between two singers, momentarily parted, Herrick saw that one condemned man twisted as if from creeping flame — that the other lay rigid, with arms outstretched in a shameful cross. Their sobbing breath struggled through the chanting, which pitched itself yet higher as the gap closed and the chorus swelled. That very morning Herrick had heard the same hymn given out by the noted divine without dreaming of its possibilities. Then it had ascended at least as high as the arched roof of the church. But now the jail stones shrank shuddering apart, and let it loose to soar, a sinking of the heart, a sickness of the flesh, a savage scream of the frightened soul, to the blackest reach of space. Herrick knew what the condemned men heard beneath that singing. He knew why they crouched with hidden gray faces. He wondered that all of these singing savages did not fall down and die of sympathy. The footsteps of each man's Fear became audible to him. Some, years away, others close at hand, and those that would gain the barred door by daybreak, mingled and merged themselves in his brain.

At this point Griggs mastered himself sufficiently to take Herrick into the jailer's room, which had been given up to the newspaper men that night. He was relieved when Herrick began making copy in a commonplace way. As for Herrick, the truth is he had not quieted down at all. The motor wheel of an electric plant is not motionless because it revolves so rapidly that it seems motionless, and Herrick had reached some such condition of the nerves. The men around him joked profanely to keep their spirits up. He did not blame them. They were, in the main, an unimaginative gang; but that death chant was of a nature to curdle the commonplace in the veins of any creature born to die.

Herrick turned out the proper amount of sensational copy, but that was his brain. His heart beat with the sick hearts in the cell. The men were dogs, but he felt the agony of their terror seize on his soul, as if it were trembling flesh in the hangman's grip.

By six o'clock the advancing footsteps had gained the door. An interval of silence fell, and presently the condemned men

were invited to keep their appointment. The black door gaped into a gray cavern of dawn, and they went out shuddering.

Herrick kept nearest. He watched the man on his side. As they reached the threshold he met this man's eyes, point blank, And they seemed not the eyes of a man. Before he had been consumed by the fear of Fear. But now Fear itself had entered into him, as devils are said to have entered into the men of old.

That look stilled Herrick into a stone. It left him futile to feel—incapable of imagining. What, indeed, did he know of Fear who had but heard the footsteps of his own?

A few weeks later Herrick did something he had not expected to do. He returned home. He wrote the girl that it was to get well. In his heart he knew that it was to die. He had resisted coming back; but he did not know what else to do. He was dying so fast that he had not strength enough for a pretense of work among the living. He was just in the way, and people, when they did not swear at him, looked sorry for him. It was simplest to get out of the way, and away from the people.

The garden was greener than ever, and he had violets of his own to put in her letters. He wrote them every day. They were mostly lies. He desired to keep her away. He did not wish her to have his dying face to remember. He very well knew what it would look like. He heard the footsteps all the time. They advanced steadily. He could almost name the date of that gray spring morning when they would enter his room, and that ghastly occupation of his living, struggling body would ensue. Warm days he dragged himself to the garden seat, and looked lovingly back at his beautiful home, with the sunshine entering at the wide doors.

The old house, the old pictures, the room of books, the green garden, and the violets underneath the oaks—all these things Herrick devised with a lover's pleasure to the girl he loved. He seemed gathering a handful of flowers to send her, and, indeed, when the trifling legality was concluded, it was as if he had done as slight a thing.

He smiled as he thought of the stories he had meant to write. They seemed to be so little worth while. He read Marcus Aurelius, as the author best fitted to dwarf the footsteps. In many moods

he ignored them, or mocked at them, but he always knew that at the end Fear would possess him, as it had possessed that mere brute, and that an excess of imagination and a total lack of it cursed men equally. He did not mind waiting as much as he had supposed that he would. He did not know if it were philosophy, or if death benumbed. He had done with letters to the girl, because his brain served him no longer to invent lies, and he found it a relief. He tried not to think about her; but in May even a dying man may not forget his love.

Perhaps Herrick's sick yearning called her back in telepathic ways; but more likely some meddler had written her the truth. At all events, she came home to him one day. But her fresh youth and beauty could not give him back life, and she had better have stayed away. She only made it harder for him to die a week later. As it chanced, he died in the night and alone. They would not let her see his dead face. She sobbed that she could never forgive them for that. But those who found him dead probably knew what they were about.



In the Sierra Madres.*

BY NEWTON NEWKIRK.



HURSTON believes himself to possess a singular intuition which enables him to select with marvellous accuracy those individuals through whose lives there are strange tales interwoven. Having picked his man he finds a keen delight in worming a story from him and was richly rewarded in the instance of Emilio Valquez.

Valquez came to New York from Mexico to study liquid air in its practical and scientific applications. This, alone, was sufficient to arouse Thurston's curiosity, which was further whetted by the Mexican's rare interest in his laboratory experiments with the mysterious fluid. When invited to Thurston's lodgings Valquez accepted with the eagerness of a child, but when his host warily approached the story of his life, he as warily evaded his questioner, who forbore until a more favorable opportunity.

It came rather unexpectedly after they had known each other several weeks. As Valquez lounged one evening in Thurston's apartments a glass of choice old wine unloosed his tongue and mellowed his mood to one of reminiscence.

"I prophesy that the potentialities of the new liquid air will outrival any the world has ever known—even steam and electricity," Thurston had said. Valquez flicked the ash from his cigarette and looked up quizzically.

"New?" There was the faintest flavor of a sneer in his tone. "New? Liquid air is by no means *new*; why, I have known of it for sixty years!"

For the instant it occurred to Thurston that the wine had a shade the better of his guest, but a clear eye and earnest manner contradicted the suspicion.

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"But, Valquez," he said smiling, "your age flatly contradicts the truth of your statement; you were certainly not an infant in arms sixty years ago; why, you had not even been born; you are not more than forty years old now."

The Mexican laughed lightly. Then his face sobered and he puffed his cigarette reflectively.

"You are complimentary, señor, but the fact remains that if I live until my next birthday, I shall be ninety years old."

Thurston looked at Valquez rather pityingly. Such a preposterous statement could not even be charged to the wine. It was rather a rebuke to his prided powers of discrimination not to have discovered the man's insanity until then. He looked at the black hair, which, according to the man's statement, should have been white as snow; then his eyes returned to a face which bore the vigor and strength of manhood's well preserved prime. At all events, he would hear this fanciful tale — would express incredulity and thus provoke talk. So he emphasized the one magic word:

"Nonsense!"

"Oh, you do not believe," Valquez retorted with spirit. "Well, you must — I have the proofs!" Then he paused dubiously. "But I have never told the story before; only one other knows — Antonio Pinguez; he was with me and is yet alive to corroborate my statements. Shall I tell you, as one gentleman tells a secret to another?"

Thurston assured him of his confidence and waited in keen anticipation for what was to follow. After all, he did not talk like an insane man; he appeared to be perfectly reasonable and rational as he spun his weird tale:

"I came of good family — there is the blood of Spanish nobility in my veins — but I do not boast of that. I was born in the City of Mexico in the year 1810 and had every advantage of early education and refinement. I was a rover by nature, but my father begged me to remain at home and succeed him in a governmental position, which I did at twenty. During the following five years I chafed and fretted under the restraint, and, unable to endure it longer, ran away from home. Antonio Pinguez, a comrade, upon whom the spirit of unrest had also seized, accom-

panied me. We determined to visit the United States and travelled rapidly northward. It was in Chihuahua we picked up José Raldarez—a roustabout—a runaway—more artful and experienced than either of us. With José we shared what little money we had left while we tarried in Chihuahua planning our expedition. Presently we found ourselves walking out of the town one evening with not a peseta among us. That night we stopped a lone horseman in the moonlight. José held a pistol at his head while Antonio and I went through his pockets with trembling fingers. We walked on until daylight, and, entering a small town, spent what we had stolen for provisions, firearms and ammunition. Then we fled into the mountains.

“That was the first step in a career of highway robbery and brigandage. We idled away the days in the fastnesses of the rocks; at nightfall we crept down to the lonely roads and lay in wait for travellers. What we took from them kept us comfortably, and easy triumphs behind cocked pistols made us bold.

“It was José who first discovered the cavern where we made our home for five years. It entered the mountain by an aperture large enough to admit a horse and then the passage gradually widened and led over three miles into the very heart of the Sierra Madres, where it terminated in a somewhat larger spherical chamber, solidly walled on every side by adamantine granite. Into this chamber we moved and lived, concealing the outside opening by artificial means. The chamber proved a dry, cool and most impregnable headquarters and in time we fitted it with every convenience money could procure, for we had enough currency at all times to gratify every extravagant fancy.

“During my school days the scientific branches had interested me greatly and in my new vocation I was enabled to devote much time to reading. By devious methods I secured such books as interested me until there was in our secret chamber a creditable library of science and standard fiction. Our trip to the States was postponed; there was something fascinating in the reckless, devil-may-care life of highwaymen. In the newspapers which we were able to get from time to time we read with much amusement of our daring exploits. Two rules we rigidly observed—never to take a human life unless in the extreme

necessity of saving our own; never to rob those who could ill afford to lose. By these unusual methods we became known as the 'Three Thieving Gentlemen!' Nevertheless, the government offered a large reward for our capture, alive or dead.

"In earlier years I had kept a daily journal of my life. After I ran away I attended to this duty even more faithfully, thinking, perhaps, I might write of my adventures in after years.

"One day — it was June 14, 1840 — I had just returned from a tramp to the opening of the passage whither I had gone to reconnoitre, and sat down to write in my journal. Outside the torrid sun blazed down with withering effect; far below me I had just seen the rocks quiver and dazzle in the terrible heat, but in the secret chamber the air was deliciously cool and bracing. Antonio played at solitaire over to my left, while José busied himself about a small blaze in one corner, in the preparation of our noonday meal. The big torch, suspended above, cast a cheerful glow about the chamber.

"Suddenly there came a low rumble which grew to a roar; the stone floor seemed to tremble and sink under me, while a cold gust swept into my face from the outside passage; then I suddenly seemed to chill strangely and found myself powerless to move. The last conscious object my vision closed upon was José standing rigid and terrified over the boiling pot.

"When I opened my eyes they were dazzled by an unaccustomed light. I looked upward and saw a newly riven cleft across the ceiling of the chamber, through which the light of day was streaming.

"'An earthquake shock, or some volcanic disturbance!'

"I spoke the words aloud and endeavored to rise, but my legs seemed cold and numb. After an effort I gained my feet, facing José — and José! — my God! — José lay before me on the stone floor in — in pieces! I instinctively sought my pistol in its holster, but the woodwork of the handle crumbled in my fingers. Had José been murdered? — Antonio? As I thought of Antonio I turned about swiftly to where I had last seen him playing solitaire. He still sat quietly with his arm raised and a card poised in his fingers as if pondering a doubtful play. Staggering to him I shook his shoulder and spoke his name. The card fell from his

hand, and, leaning wearily back in his chair, he looked up into my face in a stupid, dazed way, as if he had come out of a deep sleep.

“Antonio — they have murdered José!”

“He answered inarticulately and endeavored to rise; I noted that he, too, found this difficult and gave him my hand; his fingers seemed cold as ice. Holding to each other we staggered together toward José and bent tremblingly over him.

“Poor José’s head was lying three feet or more from the trunk; one arm appeared to have been broken off close to the shoulder and yet remained in the coat-sleeve; the other arm was cut up into several short sections and the fingers shattered into small pieces; one foot had been broken off at the ankle and remained in the shoe, which set flatly on the granite floor. We examined the severed parts more critically; they did not seem to have been cut by any sharp instrument; the bone-ends, too, appeared to have been broken; moreover, there was no evidence of a conflict; no tell-tale blood stains; no weapons.

“Dazed and terrified, Antonio and I looked into each other’s faces and then more closely about us; the fire was dead and the mixture in the kettle partially frozen. I picked up a flagon of wine; it, too, was solid ice; the leaves of my journal were seared as with age, and the writing pale; our guns, stacked in one corner, were rusted, and the woodwork of their handles shrivelled and cracked. By a kind of tacit agreement we moved toward the exit.

“*There was no exit!*

“Where the long, roomy passage from the outside had entered the cavern, we faced a wall of solid granite. Then we both looked hopefully toward the cleft through which the sunlight was streaming. Antonio was thoughtful enough to fill his pocket with coin from our strong-box. After an hour’s difficult scaling we stood in the open on the mountain’s side, looking down into the great, dark crevice from which we had crawled.

“Turning about we beheld far below us a small town, and again we sought one another’s faces in bewilderment; we had never seen this town. What did it all mean? Crouching stupidly on the edge of the rift we waited until darkness had fallen and then crept down the mountain toward the village, half expecting it to disappear as a mirage at our approach. On the outskirts we cau-

tiously entered a small eating-house. The few loungers stared at us curiously as we ordered something to eat, for we were both very hungry. We half expected to hear them discuss some of our latest escapades, as we had often heard others do, but the 'Three Thieving Gentlemen' were forgotten in their gabble about the earthquake shock which had riven the mountain that morning.

"On the table from which we ate lay a newspaper which I picked up to peruse. The first thing which caught my eye was the date. I seemed not able to read it correctly and drew the sheet closer to my eyes:

"*'Merciful God!'*

"As I gasped the words above my breath Antonio looked up quickly. I held my finger on the date of the newspaper and slowly pushed it toward him.

"*'July 7, 1890!'*

"As the words died on his lips his eyes sought mine in dumb appeal. While we gazed at one another across that table the almost unbelievable truth dawned on both of us —

"*We had been dead to the world in that mountain chamber — not an hour — not a day, but — fifty years!*

"We ate our repast in a dumb silence; the powers of reason seemed too puny to speedily grasp the marvellous truth and countless queries surged through our bewildered brains. When Antonio pushed a gold piece toward the proprietor, the latter picked it up and curiously turned it over.

"*'An old one, señor, — where did you get it?'*

"The question upset both of us, and with a mumbled explanation we hurried out of the restaurant and out of the town. For two days we tramped aimlessly northward. We found the country thickly populated. New towns and settlements had sprung up on every hand; customs and manners had undergone wonderful changes during the half century we had been buried. We found by covert enquiry that the people had long before ceased to talk of our daring robberies and that we were believed to be dead. Then we divided the money Antonio had brought from the cave and parted company. He continued northward into Texas, while I turned about and travelled back to the City of Mexico.

"Happily, no one knew me. I learned that every member of

my family had been dead many years and to their descendants I did not reveal myself. The inexplicable mystery of my fifty years' sleep haunted me strangely and I determined to devote my life to its solution. I took up the study of science with new interest and added to it the branches of physics and chemistry. Wishing to be near the cavern I removed to the small town where Antonio and I had first learned of our fifty years' imprisonment and made that my headquarters. Upon examination I found that the old-time passage leading from the mountain side into our chamber had been long closed, and learned from the government records that on June 14, 1840, there had been a violent earthquake disturbance through the Sierra Madres at that point. This satisfactorily accounted for the closing of the passage. As I sat writing in my journal on June 14, 1840, the shock caused the passage leading from the mountain side to our secret chamber to collapse. The ponderous granite slabs of the passage roof must have fallen from the outside toward the interior like a child's row of small blocks against one another, pushing the air of the three-mile passage ahead of them and compressing it with terrific force within the adamantine walls of the chamber.

"In my scientific research I found that if air is compressed, by forcing its molecules closer together, it becomes warm, and then, if a little of this compressed air is allowed to expand, what is left becomes very cold. I reasoned that if this process of compression and expansion were kept up to a sufficient degree the air would at last be reduced to a liquid condition. That the air in the cavern chamber was colder than a North-Pole temperature there is no doubt; how it was cooled or how cold it was I have no means of knowing.

"The identical force which imprisoned us during fifty years also liberated us, except that in the latter instance the disturbance rent our secret chamber and relieved the terrific air pressure; when normal conditions were restored we awoke. I have not yet solved the great secret of how the germ of life remained within us during the half century. I only know that when I awoke I seemed to begin to live at the point where I had gone to sleep. I can account for these conditions only on the theory of suspended animation; we must have been refrigerated — frozen to statues.

“José? — Ah, yes — poor José! You remember yesterday in your laboratory you submerged a piece of raw beef in liquid air; then you crumbled it to bits between your fingers. Well, José was the only one of the three on his feet when the shock came and as I closed my eyes he was yet standing rigid. José must have been frozen statuesque and after he had hardened like the piece of beef, he was probably upset and broken into pieces by some subsequent shock. The same fate must have befallen us if we had toppled over.

“Now you can appreciate why your experiments with liquid air here in the East have interested me. They seemed to offer a reasonable explanation of the mystery; so I am here. You must also admit I am ninety years old — eh, señor?”

.

Although Thurston scarcely expects others to credit the strange story of Emilio Valquez, yet he believes it. He has seen the faded journal with its broken line where the writer stopped when the shock came; an old Mexican newspaper containing the offer of a reward for the capture of the “Three Thieving Gentlemen,” and many rare coins minted early in the century. When Valquez returns to his native country Thurston is to accompany him to examine for himself the riven cave where the frozen bandit slept fifty years. He believes Emilio Valquez to be ninety years old, and sees no reason why he should not live to be one hundred and forty.



A Witch City Mystery.*

BY FREDERIC VAN RENSSELAER DEY.



JACOB HAWKSLEY was a chemist, having succeeded to the occupation as an inheritance. The Hawksleys had lived and labored at the same location in Salem, for generations, and before that, tradition said, had compounded drugs in the city of London, in the days before the Puritans left England for conscience sake. The quaint old Hawksley shop and dwelling stood, and part of it still stands, near Salem's water front. Beneath its dingy paint and planking, though remodelled many times, it still retains the stout framework of its colonial days. A generation ago even the old, illegible sign yet hung above its doorway.

Jacob Hawksley, the last of his line, had no assistant and rarely a customer, and, indeed, none but strangers dared to enter his low-ceiled, dingy shop in the early "thirties," when superstition was not so veiled as now, for rumor had woven a web of weirdest horror about the old man and his habitation. Not that he was so very old — three score, perhaps, with a smooth, benignant face, and a shrewd smile for those who feared him most. But tradesmen served him only because they dared not refuse, children fled from him, and strangers, who were mostly mariners, were warned to give his shop a roomy berth.

If but half the wonders related of the round-shouldered, studious-looking little man had been true, they were enough to account for the horror in which he was held, while their foundation on facts was undeniable. Some people said, if any living thing crossed his threshold, it never re-appeared. The grocer opposite, who served the chemist with trembling, told of scores of stray cats and dogs enticed into Hawksley's shop, but they were always homeless, miserable creatures. Ill-natured persons hinted

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that the old man ate the captured animals, though the butcher declared that Hawksley bought the best of beef and mutton. The charitable argued that the brutes were killed to release them from misery, but immediate neighbors shook their heads at this suggestion, for they remembered many nights — usually wild and stormy — when strange noises of barking and growling dogs, and still more inexplicable animal sounds, came from behind the chemist's door. Never a sign of anything of the kind was heard or seen by day, however, and if the weather permitted, the shop door stood well ajar, while the windows and curtains of the single story above were wide to the world, and canaries sang merrily there in their cages.

Sometimes screaming parrots or frolicsome squirrels took the place of the canaries, and altogether it might have been thought that Hawksley possessed a miniature menagerie but for the fact of lack of space. There were certainly no animals in the upper story, nor room for so many in the cellar as had been traced to the premises, to say nothing of long periods of unbroken silence, so the generally accepted belief made Hawksley a magician, at whose command birds and beasts appeared and disappeared.

Such benevolent actions as were sometimes reported of Hawksley were also attributed to his magical powers. On one occasion, when a friendless child was knocked down by a horse and taken up with a broken leg, it was the old chemist who bore the little sufferer tenderly away, closed the shop door in the faces of a gaping crowd, afraid to enter, and told them that he would care for and cure the foundling. The very next day the lad came forth completely sound and well, without a scar to tell of the fracture of a limb. Again, an old cripple, bent with rheumatism — a stranger in Salem — stopped to ask alms of the chemist. He entered without fear, and twenty-four hours later departed, erect and agile.

The neighbors called these cures sorcery. The rheumatic beggar could tell nothing of his cure, except that Hawksley had given him something to drink, and that presently he awoke from sleep to find himself free from shooting pains, and well and young again in his feelings. He did not know from his own consciousness whether the cure had taken an hour, a day or a year. He only knew that he was cured and could work instead of beg.

About this time came the crowning mystery. Salem then enjoyed a maritime commerce that rivalled that of any New England port, and the captain of a clipper in the Liverpool trade was seen to enter the mysterious chemist's shop, but, though watched, was not observed to go out again. Higham, the grocer, who knew Captain Simpson and his son very well, saw the captain call upon Hawksley, noticed that they seemed acquainted, and perceived that they had some sort of dispute, though neither the low tones of the chemist nor the captain's loud and angry epithets gave a clue to the matter under controversy. Hawksley, he noted, wore his wonted calm. While the grocer still watched, the door suddenly closed, and the voices could no longer be heard. An hour later, watching with unrelaxed vigilance, Higham saw Hawksley reopen the door, stand smiling a few moments on the threshold, and then, leaving the door ajar, walk deliberately down the street. But still the captain did not come out.

The tradesman was puzzled, but continued to watch, even after Hawksley returned. Then he called one of his clerks to relieve him, and all through that day and the following night the door of the chemist's shop was under observation; but Captain Simpson did not appear. There was no other means of egress from the building, and Higham, still leaving a watching assistant, and believing that a crime had been committed, went at noon to Captain Simpson's ship and told his story to Burke Simpson, the captain's son and first mate.

What follows of this strange tale is told in the words of Burke Simpson, as he wrote it down afterwards:

.
I was beginning to think it strange that the old man did not come back to the ship when Mark Higham, the Chandler, came and told me that father had gone into Hawksley's chemist shop the day before and had never come out, so I cleared for the scene at once. A hand was still on watch at Higham's and reported no sail; the old man had not yet got under way.

I crossed the street alone, for neither Higham nor his clerk would go. I knew that Hawksley and my father had been friendly in their younger days, before something—I know not

what — had come between them, yet I was surprised that father should go into a place with such a bad name. Though I believed Higham's story, I did not then believe that anything serious had happened. Hawksley looked unlike a murderer.

"I believe you know my father, Captain Simpson?" I said.

"I have known him since we were boys," replied Hawksley. "What can I do for his son?"

"You can tell me where my father is."

"I am sorry I cannot oblige you," he answered calmly. "The captain was here yesterday, shortly after noon. I have not seen him since."

"He left here, then?"

"That would seem to be the logical inference from the fact I have stated. We were together half an hour — possibly an hour — and I have not set eyes on him since."

Then I told the chemist the whole of Higham's story, and how his door had been watched from the moment of my father's entrance, and I added:

"I know there was bad blood between you, and I am going to find out, in some way, what you know about his disappearance."

He looked at me curiously, without replying. I can only compare his expression to that of a cat watching a disabled mouse that tries to crawl away. At the same time he endeavored to get between me and the door, but I was looking for such a move, and headed him off.

"None of that!" I said. "You can't close any hatches while I'm aboard. Now, then, where's the old man?"

He shrugged his shoulders, but kept his hungry eyes upon me. I had to repeat my question.

"I'm sorry I can't tell you," was all he said.

There wasn't a thing I could do, but there was one thing more I could say, and as I said it I watched him closely:

"If anything has happened to my father in this house, you'll regret it. I'll have the watch kept up, and if the old man doesn't turn up on board ship by morning, your den shall be searched, from cellar to garret."

Well, the captain did not turn up by morning, and a close watch of the chemist's shop had shown nothing out of the or-

dinary. So I went to the city marshal, and induced him and his constables to make a thorough search of Hawksley's place, but not a sign of a living thing, except Hawksley himself, was to be seen. The upper story was just a comfortable living place. The shop was just as it had looked for years. The cellar was full of casks, with movable lids, each containing liquid. Hawksley warned us not to put a finger into one of them, on pain of fearful burning. This made me suspicious.

"A body might be hid in one of these big casks," I said to the head constable. "Let's dump the whole cargo."

At this Hawksley showed the first sign of fright.

"Would you ruin me by spoiling the labor of a lifetime?" he cried.

"Then give us something to poke into them," I demanded.

He calmed down and fetched an iron rod, with which we stirred up every cask in the cellar, but not one of them contained anything but ill-smelling liquids.

After spending more than two hours in searching, sounding walls, rummaging cupboards and corners and finding nothing, we had to give up. The constables called me a fool and Hawksley's curious neighbors idiots, and I could only vent my own vexation on the grocer and chandler, at whose instigation I had caused the search. Yet, I found him as firm in his belief as ever.

Then I began a systematic search of the city, offered a reward, and did everything anybody could suggest to get a trace of my father, but nothing came of it. We had begun to discharge cargo when he disappeared, and had finished and reloaded, and still he was not heard from. He had sometimes remained away from his ship a few days at a time, but never without leaving word, and I came to the conclusion that he had been waylaid on the docks—a common thing in those days—and been thrown overboard, and that I should never see him again.

So, when sailing day came, and the owners were willing to give me charge of the ship, I had to go. But before we sailed, I had one more visit from Higham.

"Your father never came out of that place again, Burke," he said with the tone of certainty, "and there'll be other disap-

pearances, as sure as you live! Now, I'm going to keep a watch on that shop, night and day, till you get back — and there'll be something to tell."

"What makes you think so?" I asked, his manner was so solemn.

Higham leaned nearer, and said in a low voice:

"Hawksley's well off. His father left him plenty to live on. He hasn't taken in a dollar a week, sometimes, these ten years. Then why does he pretend to keep a shop? I'll tell you. He's experimenting! Sure's you're born, he's experimenting, and he must have something living and moving and breathing to try his devilish tricks upon. *That's* what I think! At first, cats and dogs and birds would do. Now he wants humans — *humans*! He's got your father and — mark me — he'll want more! And he'll get 'em!"

I thought it over a minute, and then I said:

"Nonsense! If what you hint is true, there would be *some* trace of it — and there wasn't one. However, if you'll watch the place, I'll be glad, and bear the expense."

Then the clipper slipped her moorings, and the round voyage took us seventy-five days.

So it was into October before I went ashore in Salem again, and bore away for the Chandler's shop. Higham seemed to be expecting me, and was all excitement.

"What did I tell you before you sailed?" he stuttered, the moment we were alone.

I answered his question by another equally eager one:

"Has there been another disappearance?"

"Another!" he cried. "Not only another, but *four*! Think of it, Burke Simpson, five altogether, counting your father. Three last week, and one only last night!"

I was too amazed to speak.

"Let me tell you the whole story," he said. "That place has been watched every minute since you left port, over two months ago, and last night two constables watched with me, and they're convinced at last. The old devil kept quiet as a mouse until last week — probably suspecting that he was watched. But he yielded to temptation at last. Wednesday afternoon a nigger — looked

like a cook off'n a coaster — went in, and I'll swear on a stack of Bibles as high as the South Church steeple that he hasn't come out yet! I reported that to the officers, and got laughed at."

I attempted to speak, but Higham broke in:

"Hold on. The very next day, Thursday, a carriage drove up, a gentleman got out and went into Hawksley's and the door closed. I told the driver that if he didn't follow his master immediately, he'd never see him again. He said I was crazy. After he had waited an hour, he went in. Burke, as sure as you're sitting there, *neither* of them has come out since!"

"But, good heavens, man —"

"Wait. I ain't through yet. It was about three o'clock when the coachman entered. After awhile the horses began to stray away, and my errand boy held 'em till about sundown, when I got on the box myself and drove to the watch-house. I brought pretty good proof that time, I guess, and two constables went back with me, and what do you think we saw? There was old Hawksley on his step, picking his teeth for all the world as if he had just eaten the two men! He told the officers that the coachman and his master had been obliged to go away on foot, because some one had stolen the horses! The constables were for quitting at that cool yarn, but I made 'em wait till my watcher came over and swore by all that's holy that not a soul but Hawksley had come out all the afternoon. That gave them something to puzzle over till they concluded to search the place on their own responsibility, Hawksley being willing, and I went in, too. I wanted to see with my own eyes, even if it was the Old Nick himself."

"And you found just what I did?"

"Just that and no more. Hawksley declared that he didn't know who the gentleman was, and nobody was reported missing till last night — Sunday. Then the city marshal sent for me, and set a watch of two of his men in my store, and now I guess he'll do something — after what they saw."

"And what was that?"

"The fifth disappearance! It was a sailor-man. Looked like he might be mate of a blue-water craft. You know that Hawksley, pretending to be a druggist, keeps his shop alight and his door ajar on Sunday evenings, and about half-past nine along came this

mate, half-seas over—begging your pardon—and blessed if he didn't turn in to Hawksley's before we could make a move, and the old spider shut the door on him in a twinkling. I wanted the officers to go right over, but they must needs wait what they called a reasonable time, so it was half an hour before we pounded on the door, which Hawksley promptly opened, picking his teeth, as usual, and smiling his hyena smile. We asked for the sailor.

“‘You're quite mistaken, gentlemen,’ said Hawksley. ‘No sailor—no customer at all—has come in this evening.’

“Of course, this bare-faced lie made the constables mad, and they went in at once after the man they had seen disappear, while Hawksley smoked a pipe on the doorstep. Well, they found nothing, but their report to the city marshal made him almost as mad as the rest of us. He's promised to do something by ten o'clock this morning—and if he doesn't the citizens will; there's lamp-posts handy. There, Burke, that's the story, up to date.”

It was only half-past eight, as you would say ashore, we having made port by dawn, and suddenly I said to Higham:

“Lend me your pistol.”

“Don't do it, Burke,” he said, “don't go in there alone!”

But I was determined, and he let me have the pistol, and I crossed the street, banged the chemist's door behind me, and pocketed the key. Hawksley looked astonished, but not alarmed. When I pointed the pistol at him he even smiled, but he said nothing.

I was feeling ugly, and meant every word when I said: “Hawksley, if you don't within ten seconds tell what's become of these people, and especially my father, I'll shoot you dead, and take the consequences!”

“I wouldn't,” he answered, calm as a summer sea.

“Why not?”

“Because you would be a murderer.”

“It's no murder to kill a shark,” I retorted.

“Ah, but your bullet would take five lives besides my own, including your father's!”

I felt obliged to lean against the locked door.

“Then he's alive?” I exclaimed.

Hawksley shrugged his shoulders and thrust his hands out

palms upward, like a slop-shop clothier. I was about to repeat the question, when he said :

"I think, Burke Simpson, that this affair has gone quite far enough. I had determined to explain this morning, and I would like to do so to you first. You may trust me. Put up your pistol — I will not harm you. I never harmed any living thing — never — and I will do the world untold good with the greatest discovery it has ever known. Come with me ; you shall be my assistant !"

He rubbed his hands joyously as he talked, and though I thought him crazy, I believed him harmless when watched ; and so, with the pistol in easy reach, I followed him to the cellar.

Near the centre of the floor was half of a whaler's water cask that I remembered having seen there before, but I was surprised when the old man proceeded to dust it out very carefully with a silk handkerchief. Then he surprised me much more by pointing to another smaller cask, and saying coolly :

"Simpson, your father is in there."

I jumped to choke the lie in his throat, reaching for my pistol, but he eluded me, and panting, but calmly as ever, gasped :

"If you injure me you may lose your father. He's alive now, and well — better than he has been since boyhood. You'll thank me for this — though I've kept him longer than I meant to."

"In heaven's name —" I started to say, and stopped. The man was as mad as a hatter.

"Wait ; be calm ; you shall see. Here, I need your help with this cask. We must pour its contents into the large one I have just dusted. But don't spill the least drop. It might be a finger or a toe, or even an eye. One cannot tell. And don't let the liquid touch you ; it would injure you. Easy, now, lift together."

Though I was sure he was as crazy as a loon, I thought it best to humor him, and we gently decanted the contents of the cask into the tub, to the last dregs. Then he fetched a tin dipperful of liquid from a barrel that stood just a bit away from the wall. I watched carefully, while he seemed to forget my presence as he poured the contents of the dipper into the huge tub — one so large that a man might lie at length in it.

The mixture produced a marvellous effect. The liquid began to boil and seethe and whirl as if stirred by a mighty hand. In

amazement I soon discerned a floating substance that gradually took shape, though the whirl was so rapid that I could not define it, and then, with a swiftness that the eye could not follow, and in a manner impossible to describe exactly, the whirling motion ceased as the whole contents of the tub seemed to leap together. And there before me, lying on the bottom of a perfectly dry tub, was the body of my father.

I blinked my eyes and looked again — but there was no mistake. The miracle was a fact, and my father was alive and breathing regularly. Hawksley pushed me aside till he had felt the old man's pulse. Then he bade me help him lift the captain out and carry him up stairs.

“When I awaken him, do not tell him what you know; let me do the talking. Heavy, isn't he? Better flesh and better health than he's had for many a year — it's perfect now.”

Astonishment kept me silent. We placed him in a chair in the shop, and Hawksley put on his clothes, hidden in a most ingenious locker, and held a vial to his nose. Presently he opened his eyes.

“Hello, Burke!” he exclaimed. “When did you come in? I must have had a long nap, Hawks. Devilish fine one, though, for I feel like a new man. Hawksley's remedies beat the world. He said he'd cure my rheumatism if I'd take his medicine, and damned if he hasn't. Hello! What's all that row?”

It was, as I expected, Higham, alarmed at my long absence, backed by a crowd. I showed my face at the glazed and curtained upper panel of the door, and told them to wait.

When father had stretched his limbs a bit, he helped us, in the same wondering way I had done, to bring to life the four other men confined in casks in the cellar, and when the city marshal and his men came at ten o'clock to make their search they not only found all whom they sought, but those persons assured them that they had come to Hawksley's and remained of their own free will, in order to be cured of their ills. So there was naught for the officers to do but go with the healed, when they departed; all save my father, who remained with Higham and myself to hear the wonderful tale which Jacob Hawksley had to tell.

“Of course, you think you have witnessed a miracle,” he began,

“but it was really done in accordance with nature’s — and therefore God’s — simplest laws, though it has taken generations to discover them. Many generations ago one of my ancestors began the work, so all the credit does not belong to me. I have only completed the task bequeathed from father to son through two centuries. But you comprehend the result — man’s complete triumph over disease by this process of dissolution and rehabilitation. The foundation was my ancestor’s discovery that every substance — iron, gold, or any metal, flesh, bone, gristle, etc., — may be dissolved by some chemical or combination of chemicals, and his inference was that a universal solvent might by their combination, be discovered. He did not succeed, nor his son nor grandson, but four generations back that much was accomplished — the solvent was achieved, but the effort to restore the dissolved substances to their original state always failed. If a combination of metals was dissolved, the restorative fluid gave back no alloy, but the separate metals. If an organic substance — that is, vegetable or animal matter — was put in the solution, it could be restored, but unorganized — a chaotic mass of tissues.

“My grandfather made the next step forward, and his restoring chemical not only gave back iron for iron, but brass — which is an alloy — for brass, bronze for bronze, spelter for spelter, and so on. But when he dissolved an animal — say a sickly cat — he only recovered a great quantity of separate particles, though analysis showed that they contained every substance that the live cat had contained.

“My father — doubtless the greatest chemist that ever lived — left little for me to do, for he succeeded where his ancestors had failed, and the fluid which he devised would restore a dissolved animal to its original size and shape. Unfortunately, the restored cat, dog or guinea-pig was always dead. He worked to remedy this fault, on the natural supposition that it lay with the dissolving fluid, the invention of his predecessor. When I took up the labor independently after his death — having been his assistant for years — I did so on the hypothesis, which proved to be correct, that the imperfection was in my father’s restorative fluid. It came to me as a revelation one day that, on principles which we had again and again proved to be true, the potentiality of life

was still present up to the moment when the Restorative was mixed with the dissolved being, and that death therefore was caused by the restoring agent.

"It is twenty years since I experienced that conviction, and it has taken that score of summers and winters to find the complete remedy. You are eye-witnesses of its success, but you are not chemists nor physiologists, so it would do no good to explain to you in the language of science all the details of the glorious process which will be such a blessed boon to humanity, and which I shall immediately publish to the world. The result has even exceeded my highest expectations. For example, Captain Simpson, suppose that the cask in which you have lived for nearly three months could, with its contents, have been preserved, sealed from the air, a thousand years — which is perfectly possible — and that at the end of that time some one possessing my secret should apply the Restorative, you would awaken as you did an hour ago, full of life and energy, not a day older, and utterly unconscious of the ten centuries of sleep! How would you like to be dissolved again, and try it?"

My father shuddered, but we all laughed when he said drily:

"Thank you. I'd rather take my chances on the broad Atlantic than in one of your casks. That fellow, due in a thousand years, might not keep the appointment, you see."

"I shall not soon forget my own feelings the first time I took courage enough to try my discovery on a human being," continued Hawksley. "You can well imagine them. If I failed, I should differ from a murderer only in intention, and not at all in the eyes of the world. Fate brought a drunken sailor to my doorstep with a broken arm. I dragged him inside, gave him a sleeping potion, worked rapidly while my daring spirit prevailed, and let the man go again within twenty-four hours, whole and well, and never knowing that his arm had been broken. You can see how that success emboldened me. I have practised on many that even my friend Higham did not know about. Then, Captain, you came, and told me about your rheumatism, and I judged that at your age a long rest in solution would be beneficial. You are all beginning to understand the whole thing now, but friend Higham, who has interested himself so much in the matter, has not yet

seen the operation. Come to the cellar, where I have still a fine Newfoundland dog dissolved, and I will bring him to life for you, Burke, for a present."

All notions of witchcraft blown to leeward by Hawksley's sensible talk, Higham followed us eagerly, and witnessed with bulging eyes the re-embodiment of the great dog. No sooner had the animal sniffed from Hawksley's vial than he leaped to the floor, wagging his tail.

As I patted the pet thus strangely bestowed upon me, the old chemist watched me with an inquiring look.

"Have you faith and courage enough now to do something to please me?" he finally said.

Hawksley laughed the first hearty laugh I had ever heard him utter in the dozen years I had known him by sight, when I said emphatically:

"If it is to submit to your process, I certainly have not!"

"Oh, no, not that," he answered lightly and cheerfully. "On the contrary, I wish myself to submit to it, and I want you to be the operator. You have proved to be a man of firmness, nerve and sense. I have overworked myself in this concentrated study, and I need renovation to do the important work of assuring my discovery to the whole world. Besides, none of you have seen the dissolving process. Come, be our chemist."

I still hesitated, but he continued eagerly:

"Though I am not young, my constitution is exceptionally sound, and I shall need but a couple of hours in solution. I will administer to myself the drug that causes unconsciousness, and lie at length at the bottom of this great tub. When I am fast asleep pour over me three pailfuls of the liquid in yonder yellow cask. You may watch me dissolve, or cover the tub with this tarpaulin. In from fifteen to thirty minutes I shall be completely dissolved. Counting from that time, wait in the shop for two hours. Then, from that cask, which you have seen me use several times, pour one dipperful, just as you have seen me do. Then you have only to hold this vial to my nostrils till I open my eyes. It is all very simple. You will do it, won't you?"

"We'll do it, certainly," spoke up Higham, who entered into the matter mightily, and I uttered no dissent.

Hawksley peered into the cask of Restorative.

"Enough for a dozen small men like me," he said, "but it's getting low."

The goblet of medicine to put him to sleep he fetched from the shop, and when all was ready, and he lay in the big vat, he drank it off and almost immediately lost consciousness, as we could plainly see. Then we proceeded as he had directed, drawing the tarpaulin over the tub, for none of us cared to watch. While we silently waited in the cellar for the passing of a full half hour our hearts beat anxiously — I know mine did — and we were in such a state as to shrink unnerved when, with a loud bark and ponderous rush, the Newfoundland dog dashed among us, pursuing a rat. We leaped aside, and I tried to stop the brute, but he dodged me, and as the rat slid in between the Restorative cask and the cellar wall the great beast followed, like a stone shot from a catapult, upsetting the cask, which was but half full and therefore quite light. It was all over in a moment.

Stupefied with amazement and horror, we stood there and saw the last of the priceless liquid vanish, spilled beyond redemption — soaking into the rotting boards of the cellar floor! My father was the first to recover the power of motion. He sprang to the tub and snatched away the tarpaulin. Nothing but a milky-looking fluid met our eyes. Hawksley had disappeared.

With shaking steps and trembling voices we left that awful place, followed by the dog. We left it just as it was — never to return — but in the upper shop we swore an oath of eternal secrecy.

.

Here the statement of Burke Simpson stopped, but old newspapers and records show that on that very night Hawksley's shop was burned to a charred framework, and that his opposite neighbor, Henry Higham, the grocer, was supposed to have been its incendiary, in a fit of insanity from which he never recovered.





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The Shortstory Publishing Company, Boston, Mass.

The Invisible City.*

BY FRANK LILLIE POLLOCK.



HE bare possibility of the thing, and that it should have culminated in its amazing tragedy in the midst of the enthusiastic throng as the returning regiment marched up Fifth Avenue, staggers the imagination. The soldiers had just reached Twenty-ninth Street when a man who had been standing in the crowd at the south-west corner dropped suddenly into a huddling heap upon the sidewalk. At the same moment, as was afterward remarked, those standing near experienced a peculiar sensation of physical distress, attributed by some to fatigue, but quickly forgotten in the excitement of the spectacle.

A policeman rescued the man, who was supposed to be intoxicated, and extricated him from the crowd. But a single glance into his face was enough to refute the theory of intoxication; he was ghastly pale, with open eyes; his limbs hung like limp strings, and his head waggled helplessly upon his shoulders. An ambulance was called, and the man was removed to the hospital.

He was a short, slight man, of middle age, with black moustache and black, slightly grizzled hair. He was well dressed, and had all the appearance of an American professional man. The most cursory examination showed that the case was one of paralysis of the most complete sort. Not a muscle of the system appeared to be under control, though it was believed that the man was conscious. It was of course useless to interrogate him, and he was removed to a ward and undressed.

The first surprise came with the discovery that he was wearing next his skin a garment of something resembling woven glass, flexible as silk. It recalled the famous World's Fair glass dress, but was much finer in workmanship. This strange coat of mail

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was in one piece and covered the entire body, limbs and feet, but down the back it was split in a zigzag tear.

This remarkable revelation aroused much curiosity, and the man's clothing was searched for some clue to his identity. There was not so much as a visiting card or a notebook — not even a watch or a pencil, but in an inner pocket was found a rather thick packet, wrapped in paper, like a bundle of letters. It was opened, and to the amazement of the attendants revealed a packed pile of thousand-dollar bank-notes — one hundred and seventy-five in all.

The staff immediately concluded that they had a bank robber or defaulter, and communicated at once with police headquarters. But there was no report of any such sum having disappeared. Advertisements were placed in various newspapers without success, except in the assembling of a horde of bogus claimants. Meanwhile the only man who could throw any light on the matter lay dumb and as good as dead upon his cot.

This state of things lasted for two months and a half. Early in April, 1899, the attendants observed a slight but unmistakable return of power to the paralyzed limbs. The improvement continued, but was confined to the left side alone. In a few weeks more, the patient was able to use his left arm feebly, and those around eagerly awaited the day when he should speak.

That day never came; the disease held the larynx fast. In a short time, however, he begged by signs for writing materials, and scrawled painfully with his left hand a series of characters that were wholly undecipherable by the attendants and doctors. Inspection by a linguist proved it to be very crabbed Russian, the translation being simply: "Where is my money?"

It was shown him, to his satisfaction, and a Russian interpreter was engaged. Strange revelations were expected, as a mystery of no common nature seemed involved, but no revelations were forthcoming. The patient made only the most ordinary requests. No language but Russian seemed intelligible to him, and, in view of his decidedly American appearance, it was supposed that this had been his mother tongue, to which the stroke had thrown him back.

But in a few days he took to writing, slowly and with difficulty, for several hours every day, guarding his manuscripts with the

most anxious care. They were kept under his pillow at night, and he was not willing that any one should so much as touch them. But his solicitude was not to be prolonged. His partial recovery had been attended by a dangerous lowering of vitality; his right side was dead already, while the left still lingered. In less than a week, as the house-surgeon was making his rounds, he was startled by a strange, guttural sound from the bed of the paralytic. He hastened toward it with the attendants, but the man had raised himself to a sitting posture, as if completely recovered. His mouth opened, and in a voice of no human sound he exclaimed loudly, "Vive l'Anarchie!" and fell back again — lifeless. The papers crackled under his pillow.

The mysterious patient was buried — a mystery — and the funeral expenses were paid out of his money. The superintendent, who had possessed himself of the dead man's manuscript, sent it at once to a professor of languages for translation. When the English version was returned, he read it; he read it and kept his counsel. Then, the time of his annual vacation approaching, he left New York and told no one where he was going.

First of all he went to Santa Fé, New Mexico. Thence, by horseback, he traversed the mountain trails of the north-western corner of the territory until he arrived at the "Lago de los Demonios" — the Lake of Demons. The water bearing this uncanny name lies in a round, cup-shaped valley, which twenty years ago was green and empty. Few persons ever passed, but one day a band of trappers found the valley two-thirds filled with blue water, and bordered with dangerous-looking blue mud. Their ponies snorted and held back from entering this mud, which was thereupon deemed bottomless. It was not surprising that a cloud-burst or a deflected river should have filled the valley, but it was observed that, however the wind might blow, no wave ever ruffled the surface of the lake. It remained smooth and placid as if it had been a block of solid glass. Game deserted the neighboring hills and horses manifested the utmost reluctance to approach the strange water, so that it is not remarkable that the superstitious Mexicans should have come to believe in the evil influences of the place.

But about the middle of January, 1899, a passing traveller

found the waters of the lake much lowered, with no quicksands in sight. More than that, a fresh breeze drove the blue water breaking upon the shore, and his horse manifested no reluctance to drink freely. Grouse drummed in the thickets, deer fed in the chaparral, and it was as if an evil spell had suddenly been lifted from the place. The traveller told of these things in Taos, and his report was speedily corroborated, but the lake continued to be known by its ill-omened name.

The superintendent rode around this mysterious sheet of water, explored the hills near by and meditated deeply for some hours. Then he returned to Santa Fé and to New York, with the air of a man who has accomplished his mission. His first act after returning was to re-read the dead man's statement:

"My real name is Paul Zphanoff," it ran, "and I am of Polish birth. My father was killed in the Polish insurrection of 1846; one of my brothers was accused of the distribution of Socialistic literature, and died in the mercury mines; my other brother disappeared in the fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul on a similar charge, and his fate was never known. My mother died soon after this. It is not wonderful, then, that I should have grown up with the fever of revolution in my veins.

"In 1872 I fled from Russia to France, where I began my scientific studies at the University of Paris. Very soon I ran short of money, and continued so for many years, living among the poor, for all my funds were expended in apparatus and experiments. But I shall never cease to be thankful for those years, for I grew to know the poor. I saw the hideous industrial despotism as the slaves see it, only one degree less than that of the Tsar, and that which had made me a Nihilist in Russia made me a Socialist in Paris.

"Four years later came my arrest, on an absurd charge, but leading to a year's imprisonment. I shall not dwell upon this outrage, for it has been amply avenged. It was the one thing needed to precipitate my resolution, and when I was released I joined hands with the Committee of the Red Terror.

"Then, in 1876, I made my grand discovery—the discovery which has resulted in making me the most powerful and irresponsible ruler that the century has seen. The police will remember, if no one else does, the sudden disappearance from half a dozen

capitals of a hundred of the most dangerous and most suspected labor agitators and socialists of Europe. They had departed with me, and we had gone to realize the ideal of centuries of dreamers — an industrial and ungoverned community. But for its success we had conditions of isolation impossible heretofore.

“That was due entirely to my invention. Briefly speaking, it was based on an extension of the wave theory of force. Every one knows that matter in a comparatively low rate of molecular vibration produces sound, running up the gamut, till, after an interval of silence, heat and light rays are produced. Beyond the violet of the spectrum lie the Röntgen rays, and beyond this nothing has been known, chiefly on account of the impossibility of producing a sufficiently rapid rate of vibration. This difficulty I overcame by the use of my multiplying electric motors, and beyond the violet of the prism, further than the Röntgen discoveries, I found what I have termed the ‘Hypnotic Ray.’

“To these currents are due, I believe, all the phenomena of telepathy, hypnotism and mesmerism. Hitherto all these forces have been quite uncontrollable, generated no one knew how, but for the first time I was able to produce them mechanically at will, and even to transmit them by means of suitably contrived conductors as easily as an ordinary voltage of electricity. To this the Invisible City owed its being.

“In an almost unknown valley in the mountains of New Mexico we chose our site, at the bottom of a deep, green, circular valley. Round about it we led the Hypnotic wires, with revolving discs at intervals, so that neither man nor beast was able to come within sight of them without falling under their influence, and being made by the operation of my will to believe that they saw the valley filled with water, while our colony was establishing itself within. There were but a few score of us at first, but we obtained accessions from all quarters, till, at the end of a year, the valley contained more than five hundred inhabitants.

“We had taken a vow of individual poverty as austere as that of the Capuchins — but to me was the power, to me was the glory. I alone knew the secret of the Hypnotic motors, and every soul in the place was blindly and unconsciously under my influence. Not one was able to pass outside the lines while the wires were

charged, and the machines were never stopped. Meanwhile we increased in numbers and in collective wealth, for we had set about extensive mining operations and daily took out an average of five thousand dollars' worth of gold dust. A scientifically cultivated zone of land supplied all our own needs, and the proceeds of our mine were devoted to the cause of Socialism and Anarchy. I alone went into the outer world from time to time to sell the gold and apply the money where it was the most needed.

"Frequently emissaries were dispatched outside on special service, but not one of these ever returned. They were invariably caused to lose all memory of the city on departing, remembering only the blind purpose with which I had inspired them. Ravachol was one of these — Lucchini, the slayer of the Austrian Empress, was among the latest. Whenever a king has been shot at or a millionaire assassinated during the last ten years it has been at my order, and as surely by my hand as if I myself had held the weapon.

"The city continued to grow, even beyond my expectations, and in 1889 was already densely populated. Ten years later, indeed, it contained upwards of ninety thousand toilers — nearly a hundred thousand automata. Frequently I made journeys to recruit new settlers, as well as to spy upon the machinations of our enemy, the World. I became well known in the business and social circles of four capitals, and it was upon one of these expeditions that I was so ill-starred as to meet Marie Lorrime.

"She was the daughter of a multifold millionaire, a man against whom all our hostility was directed, but I found myself loving her from the first. I struggled hard, I went back to the Invisible City, I worked, I plotted, I cursed, but I could not tear the love out of my soul. I had never known the like before; here was something absolutely beyond my control. To love meant desertion to the enemy, and treachery of the most dastardly kind to the cause of liberty. For a year I did not go within five hundred miles of her, and I devoted myself fiercely to the grim business of dynamite and stilleto, as half a dozen nations know to their cost.

"All was in vain. I was as completely enchanted as were the deluded victims of my powers. Strangely enough, to exercise these powers upon her I felt to be impossible. Yet I did not even

know whether she had so much as dreamed of loving me, nor did I much care. Such love as mine, I knew well, was not to be balked by a mere woman's will. It was with my own will that the battle lay.

"There is no need to detail my struggles — they lasted for three years, and at last I gave up the unequal conflict. It was in the Invisible City, late at night, I remember, that I at last admitted defeat, and, once conquered, I made immediate preparations to open my new career and completely close the old. Human life, I am glad to say, has never weighed much with me. Our immense water reservoir was situated on the hillside just above the city, and by night I employed myself secretly in weakening the gates. I also labored to turn the half dry course of a river that a cloud-burst always changed to a roaring torrent, and to deflect it toward the reservoir. The valley would fill like a cup with the next cloud-burst, and not a man could pass the lines, even under fear of death. For myself, the only danger was that which always menaced me in leaving the city, — that the grounded Hypnotic wires should make the earth circuit to my body — for the constant neighborhood of the strange psycho-physical currents had produced an effect somewhat akin to polarization — to avoid a technical explanation. As a safeguard I wore a complete garment of woven glass, manufactured by our own processes and flexible as cloth.

"On the third of January, 1899, I secured what gold happened to be in the treasury, and left the Invisible City for the last time. I went straight to New York, where I exchanged the dust for thousand dollar bills."

At this point the narrative broke off abruptly, ended by the death of the mysterious writer. What was the true cause of his strange paralytic seizure? Had the wonderful "Hypnotic Ray" found him out, and avenged upon him the murder of a hundred thousand people?

No one will ever know. And meanwhile the Invisible City rests at peace beneath the blue water of the Lake of Demons — invisible forever.



The Man who Found Zero.*

BY ION ARNOLD.



“YOU are my prisoner!” Instantly the glass was dashed from Heston’s lips. A strong hand was upon him. He turned and looked up. It was the Professor.

“Follow me!” he commanded, sternly. Heston arose and followed, trembling.

In the dim laboratory the great scientist turned and faced his pupil. He took from rigid fingers the sheet whereon Heston had scrawled a farewell to the world, glanced at it and tore it up. Then the strong face uplifted and a piercing gleam shot through the shaggy brows. The youth who had not feared to face death cowered before it.

“Heston,” he said, “I knew, when you received word of your father’s bankruptcy that you considered your scientific career at an end — that you are too proud to go on through charity and without genius to win a scholarship. I happened to learn that, with prospects swept away, you have released from her engagement the only woman in the world to you. I saw you steal to that cabinet, and I followed. I looked for the third bottle from the end, the blue vial containing the deadliest alkaloid known to science. You poured out enough for a regiment. You were determined to die. I know your temperament — nothing will stop you.

“All this sounds brutal, but listen. Since you are determined to die, I am going to help you. You shall make yourself blest instead of cursed of men — an immortal. You shall die like a gentleman and a scientist, and science shall bless you. I am going to send you in search of absolute zero!”

Heston nodded, shuddering slightly, and tried to steady his thoughts as he followed the Professor up a flight of winding stairs to an apartment where none had ever been admitted.

“Absolute zero!” he thought; “that point of cold where all molecular motion ceases — 460 degrees below zero, Fahrenheit!”

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Compared to such a temperature, he was now breathing white-hot flame. If creatures from some distant planet of that temperature should visit earth, they would be burned to a cinder in the normal heat of a room. If they touched ice, it would sear their flesh like a brand-iron. If they fell into the crevasse on an Alpine glacier, it would be as if earth-dwellers fell into the seething crater of Vesuvius. Think how ten degrees warmer makes one throw off his outer garments, and ten degrees colder makes one shudder with a chill. Think, now, of four hundred degrees hotter! A man would be reduced to a cinder! Four hundred degrees colder — he would become brittle as a pipe-stem!

A touch of a button by the Professor, and the room was alight. Heston stood silent. Never had he been in so strange a place. In the centre of the chamber, directly beneath the great skylight through which the star-beams played, there stood the strangest mechanism ever beheld by man. It consisted of three globes, one within another, resting on an aluminum engine, as to whose workings the student had no clue and could not hazard a guess. The globes were of crystal clearness. At the upper end of the inner shell, which was of oblong shape, lay a swansdown pillow of lightest silk — at the lower end was a contrivance concerning whose use he could but wonder. He studied it, fascinated, but trembling.

“Behold at once your glory and your grave!” It was the great scientist who spoke, and his voice was the voice of doom — his face like a death-mask cut in solid phosphorus. “In that combination of bulbs, Heston, you are going on a journey that no man has ever travelled. You will make a record of your trip to that remote realm, for you are to be shot upward to the very frontier of our atmosphere — to the threshold of space — sixty miles straight over our heads this minute. There you will find absolute zero. No man has ever seen or recorded it, but science has demonstrated it — and it remains for you to find it!

“The two outer bulbs enclosing your crystal sepulchre are perfect vacuums. They will shut out all cold, all heat, all sound. Without those vacuum shrouds, sir, you could not ascend ten miles without being frozen into a pillar of ice. But in that inner bulb, protected so, you may penetrate the realm of absolute zero, warmed by the latent heat of your body. Below is an aluminum engine,

run by liquid air, with an energy sufficient and a reservoir large enough for your entire journey. At first your flight will be very swift on account of the density of the lower atmosphere, but your later journey will be slower. When you have reached a temperature corresponding to that of liquid air, so that exterior heat no longer makes the liquid air boil and give off power, an automatic arrangement will start an electrical heating current in vacuo, and you will proceed as before. You will make profuse notes of every sensation and experience. When you reach the frontier of space you will be suspended till the last drop of your propelling power has been exhausted, when you will fall.

"Ah, you shudder, and I do not marvel. Falling from such a height, both you and your machine would simply burst to atoms midway on the home journey. But again I provide for the contingency. The moment the engine stops, an automatic arrangement releases it from you. Instantly from beneath your crystal prison-house there will shoot out a hundred silken-like but immensely strong parachutes, flying upward and suspending you from a hundred delicate but unbreakable strands. Your initial fall will be about four miles a second, gradually decreasing until you reach the earth, sinking as lightly as a feather to your destination. Now, sir, this is all theoretical. I have worked it out to a hair's-breadth by the aid of differential calculus; but there is always the unknown equation. I assure you that you will reach the border-land of space; of your safe return there is one chance in a million. Will you freely go?"

"I only regret that there is that one chance of a return!" replied Heston.

The cold scientist caught the boy in his arms in rapture.

"You *are* a brave lad, after all," he said with faltering voice. "Sit while I bring you your last supper. You are about to enter upon a long fast, and you need all your strength. You must eat. Heston dropped upon a hard bench, staring past that wonderful life-boat or death-cage, destined for the unknown, up through starry space, his soul on fire, his brow chill with sweat-drops. What a magnificent ending! What a contrast to the shabby exit he had all but accomplished! He sat benumbed.

When the Professor returned with a well-laden basket of food

he gave but one command, "Eat!" Then he turned his whole attention to filling the reservoir of the liquid-air engine and making cautious tests. Five large copper tanks, from which cold vapor fumed and curled downward toward the floor, he brought from an elaborate liquefier connected with the basement dynamo.

But Heston did not touch a mouthful. He simply could not.

"Disrobe!" ordered the savant. The student obeyed, and the Professor produced a strange suit, of the finest web silk, padded thick with swansdown. This feather armor fitted like a glove.

"Take these sheets of parchment and this indelible pencil. Write down everything. Let nothing escape your observation. Watch the barometer on your left and the mercury, alcohol and hydrogen thermometers outside the outer bulb. Now fold your arms. Are you ready?"

Deftly and gently the young man was pushed, head foremost, into his crystal dungeon, and a mechanism was set in motion that was to fill the living tomb with an invisible spray of ozone.

"Good-bye, lad," murmured the Professor, in a voice not without emotion, "I pray to God that we meet again!" but the tone said plainly, "Never!"

The door closed softly upon Heston's living sepulchre, and by the turn of a lever was hermetically sealed. The sudden silence filled him with a strange terror. He saw the Professor moving about, saw his lips move as he rolled back the great skylight, but not a sound nor a vibration penetrated his vacuum coat-of-mail. He was cut off from the world by two walls of nothingness. A delicious breath, like mountain-pine odors, enveloped and refreshed him. He closed his eyes in peaceful resignation. What an exquisite way to die!

"My God!" he cried. There had been a whirr, a throb, a shudder, neither felt nor heard, but he was off! With widened eyes he caught a glimpse of the Professor, his countenance ablaze with triumphant joy, waving a last farewell. Faster, faster, faster! Through the roof of the university dome he sailed like a disembodied spirit, swifter, lighter, with the stars seeming about to fall upon him. He turned his head. Now faded the lights of the great city, dwindling away to a confused blot, the immense blank curve of the horizon lost in a vague blend of clouds. But the

stars — how glorious, how more than bright they seemed! There was not a breath of air to swerve him from his upward course, not the slightest tilting motion — yet now he knew a peculiar whirr which he could feel but could not hear. Up and up and up, faster, still faster, through night and silence he was borne — like a lost soul doomed to wander endlessly through space he flew — a willing suicide, alone with God! He lay limp and quivering. Was this death?

Heston passed into a state of semi-consciousness, but when he woke the sickness and the terror were gone, and he lay calmly in his armor of down. The rich, life-giving ozone penetrated his vitals as a potent drug, reviving him, snatching him, it seemed, from annihilation. No longer the silence haunted, no more the darkness, loneliness, helplessness of his position benumbed him. Through the curving domes of his crystal palace and grave he gazed upon the planets, as if journeying directly into their glorious midst, there to choose a home through all eternity. An intoxication of hope and triumph informed him. The shame, the sorrow, the defeat, the guilt of conscience, were gone. He seemed to have sloughed off all mortal anguish and sensibility to pain as he had laid aside his garments on leaving the haunts of men. The majesty of night, the immensity of the firmament, the glory and perfection of the great Creator of it all — never had their realization so overwhelmed him. At times he seemed sublimated, inspired. No longer was he the accursed worm of the earth. He was one with the stars, the invisible ether, the potent Ego of divinity, coeval with Nature and the Infinite.

He knew that, passing upward at his present stupendous rate, he had already reached a height beyond that ever attained by man. Even this little victory seemed to challenge the ages. On, on, on! He could not travel fast enough to suit the passion now. What though the penalty of it all were death? It would not be the ignoble death he had sought — it would be indeed the scientist's, the soldier's, the king's! His Mentor, far from being a remorseless tyrant, now appeared in the light of a benefactor. He closed his eyes in thankful ecstasy and slept!

When Heston awoke from his slumber it was dazzling sunlight. And such a dawn! Up from the east there shot great floods of

scarlet light — throbbing, quivering, unspeakably glorious. He seemed to be borne aloft through an infinitude of flame. With difficulty turning his head to the proper angle, he caught sight of the great circular blot of the earth, half obscured in fan-shaped stretches of purple and gold. The whirring shudder beneath him was now three times faster than when he fell asleep. The resistance of the atmosphere was less and less and his progress slower, though the engines were working to their fullest capacity. He scanned the thermometers outside. The one containing mercury had burst its bulb. The alcohol in the other had frozen to a yellowish icicle. He turned breathlessly to the barometer. It no longer gave any record. Then at last he consulted the hydrogen thermometer. It registered 246 degrees below zero! His flight had been faster, even, than the scientist's calculations had foretold. He had already covered more than half his upward journey.

Remembering his promise to his accomplice in suicide, he took up the parchment and pencil and began to write. But, like one who arrives in some region hitherto unexplored by man, he found so much to say, and yet so little that he could put into words. Line upon line, in closely-written, terse and teeming language, he recorded as intelligibly as possible his amazing experience, wondering if the words would ever reach a human eye. Often he was compelled to rest, for there was barely room for the movement of his arms, and the brightness of the day stung him to partial blindness. Often he shielded his lids with the parchment sheets.

He felt calmer now, and wished that he had eaten or had food, that he might be sure to live — live to prolong the delicious agony of his unique suicide. Interest in his surroundings compounded, and inspired him. He studied himself no less critically than the vast depths of crimson nothingness that lost him as a meteor plunging out of illimitable space toward the great bosom of the sun, to feed it. He felt colossal in vanity — an atom in reality. His thoughts reverted to the events of the past few days, to his lost home, to the calamities that had crowded upon him — to Her. Would she ever know his fate? How soon would there be a commotion over his disappearance, as sudden and complete as if, on some mountain pinnacle, he had burst to atoms and been blown back to his primeval dust? He knew that one, at least, far down

below, where it was yet gray dawn, sat with eagle orb pressed to the eyepiece of the great university refractor, scanning the zenith, and very likely, as the sun's rays glistened upon his crystal coffin, watched his progress, trembling more for the success of a stupendous experiment than for the fate of its probable victim.

As the sun mounted higher its brilliancy became crucial. It was with difficulty that Heston could make the merest notes, covering his face with his hands continually, the parchment over them. Nevertheless, in that rarefied atmosphere, it seemed that the sun pierced them like X-rays, although its heat could not penetrate the vacuum bulbs in which he was inclosed any more than could the cold. Often he thought he saw the very interior workings of his hand laid over his eyes, so sharp was the light—the bones, the sinews and the ruby blood coursing the veins.

Then came a long lapse into unconsciousness. The intense glare of the almost vertical rays, the faintness of hunger and the strain of an abnormal attitude, both physical and mental, combined to induce a deep lethargy, from which the voyager into unknown regions waked to find the sun low in the west, having passed him like a white-hot projectile shot out of space, curving over earth into space again. Its brilliancy was waning, and he rallied from his stupor. He noted his environment and the slower throb of the engine. Manifestly, he was going at a vastly diminished speed. Already the world he had left was claiming him again, and the mass of 260,000,000,000 cubic miles of solid earth and water beneath was exerting upon his frail shell the irresistible attraction of gravitation, applying an invisible brake to his extraordinary vehicle.

The blue of the sky overhead had deepened to indigo, a mantle of purple and gold dimming the west, where the sunset was even more glorious than the daybreak had been. One by one the stars sprang out of the deep blue vault, more brilliant, more dazzlingly beautiful, with now and then a shooting meteor that, bombarded out of space, seemed to come alarmingly near the rash intruder into these great altitudes, trailing across his pathway an avalanche of effulgent meteoric dust.

There stood Jupiter, monarch of the planets, all his five moons perfectly visible to the naked eye. Far to the eastward blazed

Saturn with his triple belts, no longer a mere speck, but like a lamp of glory hung aloft in a cathedral dome, with Mars opposed, never so crimson, with its wondrous tracery of canals and mountain ranges, revealed to the awed observer as through a powerful glass. He no longer wondered that astronomers seek high places — for could man's greatest telescope be raised to such a height the mysteries of the heavens would be mysteries no more.

Heston's sense of feeling, now rendered extremely acute by hours of absolute silence and deprivation of hearing, assured him, by the feeble beating of the engine, that for a long time he had been going upward through the sunset with a slowness as extreme as had been the velocity with which he had darted up through the dawn, and that he must now be nearing his goal. He looked at the hydrogen thermometer. It no longer recorded temperature, which meant that he had attained a height where the cold was more than 340 degrees below zero, and that the engine was working upon artificial electrical heat in a vacuum, having passed the point where liquid air ceases to give off power.

Even as he looked at the frozen hydrogen he felt a trembling movement beneath him. His heart leaped. That dying shudder meant that the last drop of liquid air was gone, and he had reached his journey's end!

He gazed upward. The spectacle was overwhelming. Every star shone out with thrilling brilliancy. For a long moment he seemed suspended there, pushed up to the very summit of the dome of atmosphere. A vast, swirling, convolving cloud of vaporous blue filled all the heavenly vault. Beyond it he saw, as if it were indeed a wall, the realm of solid oxygen, life-giver of the world, enclosing the earth in a transparent, moving cerulean shell. Beyond that lay the immensity of space.

Yes, for one single instant Robert Heston gazed upon that which no mortal had ever seen at close range — but hardly was he convinced of the triumphant termination of his journey than he felt the engine suddenly disengage itself from his prison, felt a terrific sense of falling — falling faster than ever man or god has fallen since Vulcan was cast from heaven into the sea! He quivered, struggled, gasped — realizing that the end had come. Then he remembered that he must write! But who could record the

mental anguish of falling headlong into the jaws of doom at the rate of four miles a second? He groaned aloud, stiffening for the inevitable crash, yet strangely sensible of all passing experience.

Soon strange forms shot by him on every side, billowing out above him, and he realized that he was hanging in the thin, rarefied air, suspended by a hundred tiny strands, each with a parachute at its upper end, struggling and straining to retard that fearful downward flight, and each second succeeding better as denser strata of the atmosphere were reached. God! How he thanked them! He had now no wish to die. Heart-beats were ages to him. He grew faint and a blurred phantasmagoria swept before him — vivid memories, wild youthful dreams, friends, strangers, loved ones, things beautiful and things hideous — red, green, pushing, crushing — in one mad pageant of man's last hour. Then oblivion brought peace.

"We found it floating in the bay," Heston heard a gruff sailor voice say. "We thought it was a cake of ice with a man frozen in it. But we soon found different, and towed the queer thing ashore. In landing it broke to bits, and we found this stranger insensible, but breathing. We called the cop and the ambulance, and here he is. That's all I know. You medical sharps can make what you please out of it. I'm just telling you the truth."

Heston dozed again. Then he awoke at the sound of a voice, and sharply opened his eyes. Two faces were bent eagerly over him. One was that of the Professor, the other that of his betrothed. Upon the face of the former he saw nothing but intense scientific interest — cold, eager, critical. Upon the other nothing but love — all love, but full of wonder and hope.

"Professor," he whispered weakly, "you were perfectly right. The earth is enclosed in a shell of solid, transparent oxygen. I reached the realm of absolute zero!"

The great scientist gave a short nod and grunt of satisfaction, and turned smilingly away to make some notes, while a pair of soft arms stole about Heston's neck.

"Dearest," he murmured, gazing into the sweetest face on earth to him, "I believe I *do* want to live, after all!"



**The
Black
Cat's
Story
Tellers'
Tournament
Now
Open**



OR the man or woman who has a story to tell here is the opportunity. As name or reputation count for absolutely nothing with The Black Cat, it matters not who you are or what you are; but it matters very decidedly what you tell and how you tell it. It is also of prime importance that your story be original—your own creation—and submitted in accordance with the printed conditions. All contestants cannot win; but all have an even chance. The fact that The Black Cat has blazed the path of profit for hundreds of unknown writers, that no one connected with it is personally acquainted with even one out of fifty of those who have gained admission to its columns—these facts show that in its contests the man from Borneo has precisely the same chance of success as the man from Boston, provided his story is of equal merit. The world, moreover, never lent so eager an ear to the story teller as it does today, and he who fails and feels that his efforts have not met with proper recognition will find consolation and profit in knowing that other publishers are looking for the sort of tales that have made The Black Cat famous. The merit and marketable quality of a "Black Cat Story" are shown by the fact that to-day some of the foremost newspapers in the United States and England are paying for the privilege of reproducing the tales that have appeared in The Black Cat this year, last year, any year.

Rich

Rewards

For

Creative

Brains

\$10,285.00

In

Prizes



THE Black Cat leaves it to other publications to have written to order, at so much per thousand words, stories by famous writers and to publicly praise such stories before they are written. Yet from the outset **The Black Cat** has paid from five to ten times as much as was ever before paid for short stories, provided the finished product was submitted to it for examination and found available. It has paid as high as \$1,500 for a story of 4,000 words, and it is a significant fact that while it has purchased tales from writers all over the world it has never, in its six years' experience, placed a price upon a story that was declined by its author. While other publications pay according to length **The Black Cat** pays according to strength. It does this because it appreciates the fact that greater skill, care and art are required to tell and to tell well the average story in 3,000 words than to tell it in 5,000 words. Hence it urges competitors to put into their efforts the sort of hard writing that makes easy reading.

The prizes in this contest surpass, in liberality and originality, any ever awarded. **The Black Cat** is determined that its readers shall have the best stories that skill and genius can produce and money can buy, and each one of its multitude of readers will confer a favor upon others as well as upon the publishers, by bringing this prize tournament to the notice of any who have stories to tell.

Prize
Trip
Circling
The
Globe
Costing
\$2,100
Consuming
179
Days



O stimulate interest, the prizes, aggregating \$10,-285, include a series of special awards, each of which is believed to be equal to the best of its kind obtainable. Their values as given are not inflated list prices but actual cash selling prices. Here is the list:

\$2,100 TRIP FROM BOSTON ENCIRCLING THE WORLD, over the most comfortable, interesting, approved lines of travel, touching leading centres of interest in America, Europe and the Orient, including first-class accommodations everywhere, and consuming 179 days. This is not a race around the globe in which the tourist keeps his eye on the time table and his hand in his pocket, but the most luxurious, instructive and fascinating tour our planet affords. The trip will be under the direction of the Raymond & Whitcomb Company, who, as caterers to those desiring the best on land and sea, have earned the world over the reputation of Kings of their profession. Detailed particulars will be given in future issues of The Black Cat.

SKENE AUTOMOBILE, SURREY MODEL NO. 5, \$1,300. This modern, up-to-date vehicle is not one of the experiments but an accomplished success. It is propelled by steam, the standard motive power of the world, and specially constructed for touring and long runs; seats four and has canopy top for protection from sun or rain.

\$500 CROWN PIANO:

**A
Thousand
Dollars
And
Glory
For
A
Black
Cat
Story**



WITH its ten years' warrant burned in the back, the Crown Piano bears the highest reputation, because of the quality and variety of its tone, even scale, responsive touch and superior construction. It possesses the "practice clavier" so desirable for student, teacher and artist.

ROUND TRIP FROM BOSTON TO CALIFORNIA. 20 days from Boston to San Francisco and return over the following model railroads:-- Boston @ Albany; New York Central; Lake Shore; Atchison, Topeka @ Santa Fe. Including first-class accommodations, sleeping berth, meals en route and \$5 cash daily (\$100) for expenses.

THE ANGELUS, \$250. That marvellous instrument whereby any one can at once play any piano with the touch and technique of an artistic musician. A prize which will double the value and pleasure of a piano in any home.

ROUND TRIP TO CUBA. 15 days from Boston to Havana and return, via New York. First-class accommodations with \$5 daily (\$75) for expenses.

FOX WRITING MACHINE, \$110. The Fox costs a trifle more than old-fashioned writing-machines, but possesses original points, including ball-bearing carriage, which make it well worth the money. Its users are its loudest praisers.

OLIVER TYPEWRITER, \$100. Writes in sight, holds Paris Exposition Gold Medal, has superseded the old timers in hundreds of leading establishments. None better.

Princely
Prizes
They
Will
Win
Who
The
Cleverest
Stories
Spin



S heretofore, the founder and publisher of The Black Cat will pass final judgment on the stories submitted.

No one can possibly have so great an interest in the magazine as he has, and as its success in the future, as in the past, depends upon the excellence of its stories, he personally will be the greatest loser in case the public fails to sustain his judgment. He feels, moreover, that in taking this course, he is simply exercising what is recognized the world over as a buyer's right: that he who pays his money is entitled to his choice. That his decision will be free from prejudice and favoritism of any kind the complete records will conclusively show, and the records, whether of this or any other contest, are at all times open to the scrutiny of any competitor.

The requirement that each manuscript be accompanied by an annual subscription to The Black Cat is necessary as a check upon wholesale offerings of carelessly prepared and undesirable stories. The cost alone of handling the manuscripts--recording, reading, returning--will far exceed the amount received from subscriptions, and as the total outlay connected with the competition will exceed \$30,000 the profits from subscription receipts cut absolutely no figure.

To facilitate careful consideration and to ensure the promptest decision, all competitors are urged to submit their manuscripts at the earliest possible date.



BELOW is a list of the prizes. The capital prize--first-class tour of the world ticket--will be delivered to the winner with check covering expenses to Boston and return. The same applies to the 6th and 17th prizes. All cash prizes will be paid by certified check on The International Trust Company, of Boston. The Automobile, Piano, Angelus and Typewriters will be delivered, freight prepaid, at any railway station.

Total Prizes \$10,285

1st.	Tour of The World, 179 days, (See page xv)	Actual Cost	\$2,100
2d.	Skene Automobile, (See page xv)	Actual Cost	1,300
3d.	Cash.....		1,000
4th.	Cash.....		500
5th.	Crown Piano, (See page xvi)	Actual Cost	500
6th.	Round Trip, Boston to San Francisco, (See page xvi)		350
7th.	Cash.....		300
8th.	Cash.....		300
9th.	Angelus, (See page xvi)	Actual Cost	250
10th.	Cash.....		200
11th.	Cash.....		200
12th.	Cash.....		200
13th.	Cash.....		150
14th.	Cash.....		150
15th.	Cash.....		150
16th.	Cash.....		150
17th.	Round Trip, Boston to Cuba, (See page xvi)		150
18th.	Cash.....		125
19th.	Cash.....		125
20th.	Cash.....		125
21st.	Cash.....		125
22d.	Cash.....		125
23d.	Fox Typewriter, }	Actual Cost {	110
24th.	Oliver Typewriter, }		100
(See page xvi)			
25th to 39th.	15 Cash Prizes at \$100 each.....		1,500



COMPETITORS may choose their own themes. We especially desire, however, stories in which the morbid, unnatural and unpleasant are avoided rather than emphasized. Good, clean, humorous tales are desirable. No dialect stories, translations, plays or poems will be considered; nor any story not submitted strictly in accordance with the conditions. We want original stories, out of the ordinary, free from commonplace and padding, and interesting throughout.

Conditions :

1. Each manuscript must bear at the top of the first page the writer's real name and address, in full (if it is desired that the story be published under a pen name that must likewise be given), as also the number of words it contains, which may range from 1,500 to 6,000, but must not exceed the latter. Other things being equal, the shorter of two stories will be preferred.

2. Manuscripts must be plainly written (with typewriter or pen) on one side of paper only, on sheets not larger than 8 x 11 inches, must be sent unrolled, *postage or express charges fully prepaid*, and accompanied by addressed and stamped envelopes for return. Letters advising submittal of stories must be *enclosed with manuscripts*, not sent separately. Manuscripts will be received and returned only at writers' risk. Upon our payment for a story the author relinquishes to us all rights thereto of whatsoever nature.

3. Every story must be strictly original and must, neither wholly nor in part, have appeared in print in any language. Every story will be judged solely on its own merits; the name or fame of a writer will carry absolutely no weight. And furthermore, every story will be valued, not in accordance with its length, but with its worth as a story.

4. With every manuscript there must be enclosed, in the same envelope, one yearly subscription to **THE BLACK CAT**, together with 50 cents to pay therefor. On subscriptions to foreign countries 24 cents must be added for postage. All money should be sent by draft, postal money order, express money order or registered letter. One- or two-cent postage stamps in perfect condition will also be accepted. If competitors are already subscribers to **THE BLACK CAT** or submit more than one manuscript, their existing subscriptions will, if desired, be extended or the new ones may be taken in the names of other parties. Any competitor may send as many stories as desired, but with each story all conditions must be complied with.

5. All envelopes containing manuscripts as above must be plainly marked "For Competition" and addressed, "The Shortstory Publishing Company, 144 High Street, Boston, Mass." Their receipt will be acknowledged.

6. The competition will close February 26, 1902. The awards will be paid within 60 days thereafter, and announced in the earliest possible issue of **THE BLACK CAT**. Should two stories of equal merit be considered worthy of a prize, the prize will be either doubled or divided.

7. For stories unsuccessful in the competition but deemed desirable, we will either award special prizes, of not less than \$100 each, or make a cash offer. All unsuccessful manuscripts, submitted as above, will be returned after the contest has closed. The conditions and requirements being here fully set forth, we cannot enter into correspondence relative thereto.

Important. *As no story will be considered unless all the above conditions are complied with, competitors should make sure that their manuscripts are prepared strictly in accordance therewith, are securely sealed in strong envelopes, and fully prepaid. Don't hold your story till the latest moment, but send it as soon as ready, thus facilitating earliest possible decision.*

The Shortstory Publishing Company, Boston, Mass.

The Gargoyle Room.*

BY ANNA MCCLURE SHOLL.



IN the spring I received a letter from a London firm of lawyers informing me that by the death of my great-uncle, William Courtright, I had become possessor of his property, consisting of several thousand pounds and an ancient house, near Canterbury.

On the voyage over, I had leisure to arrange into some semblance of personality the slight knowledge I possessed of my deceased relative. In our family circle he had always been spoken of with a curious mixture of awe and distrust, as of some one far removed from everyday folk by his habits of life and thought. I knew that in his youth he had studied architecture, law and chemistry, but had adopted no profession, a restless and insatiable intellect impelling him always onward to new fields of knowledge. On the death of his father he invested his share of the patrimony to advantage and left the United States, never to return. That had been forty years ago. During his long self-exile he travelled extensively in Europe and Asia; and, at last, purchased a house in the south of England, which he filled with the strange curiosities and bizarre bric-à-brac collected in his travels. In this house he had died.

When I passed for the first time across its threshold, and stood in the broad, low-roofed hall, filled with an indescribable jumble of tapestries, Indian brasses, old china, ecclesiastical vessels, altar hangings, bridal chests and what not, I had the sensation of being in the presence of my uncle himself. The moral atmosphere of houses is sometimes as subtle and penetrative as that surrounding an impressive personality. The spirit of William Courtright had found expression and embodiment in the strange furnishings of this sixteenth century dwelling.

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"A kind of modern Faust," I reflected, as the silent housekeeper, an inheritance with the house, led me from room to room with stony impassiveness, as if she herself were but a bit of ancient bric-à-brac come to life.

"This is a fine bed-room. I will use this while I am here."

We were standing in the centre of a large room which seemed of later date than the rest of the house, its vaulted roof and pointed windows being of the pseudo-Gothic of the eighteenth century. Like the other rooms, it contained bric-à-brac and art-treasures, but more sparsely placed. The height of the ceiling and the views from the lofty windows commended it to me as an airy and pleasant bed-chamber.

"This was Mr. Courtright's room, sir. If I may be so bold as to suggest, sir, I would say that the blue bed-chamber is to be preferred. It has the sun and the view of the Cathedral."

I was astonished to discern a quaver of anxiety in the woman's voice. What possible difference could it make to her which room I took? I turned and looked directly at her. The stony mask had dropped from her face. Anxiety and pleading were in her dim eyes.

"But this room is pleasant," I said. "I prefer it."

"Very well, sir." Her voice was resigned.

As I was turning to the door the sun, which through the morning had been obscured by heavy clouds, burst forth, revealing every part of the room with distinctness. Then I noticed for the first time a horrible object—a large stone gargoyle, the size, indeed, of a dwarf, fastened high on the wall above the fire-place. No stone monster on the balustrade of Nôtre Dame, where mediæval fancy has taken its most grotesque shapes, could compare with it for hideousness. The knees were drawn up to the humped breast, as if in a spasm of pain; the preternaturally long arms were wrapped about the knees; the crooked shoulders were drawn convulsively forward. But it was the face that focused the horror of the figure. The great nose and ears, the shapeless, gaping mouth, the receding forehead, would in themselves have been revolting. Contorted as they were with an expression of the intensest malignity and hate, they seemed capable of inspiring a kind of nightmare terror. I at once associated the gargoyle with the housekeeper's protest against my occupying this particular room.

"That's a pretty piece of bric-à-brac!" I said, going towards the fireplace. "Where did your master pick up such a horror?"

The woman had grown strangely pale.

"I don't — don't know, sir," she stammered, and then, as if she found relief in words, she went on quickly, "It's an awful thing. When you're in the room it makes you look at it. It follows you with its stare, with its curse, I say. Master would never have it taken down. He looked at it when he was dying — when he was dead. The stone man and the dead man stared at each other till I closed his eyes."

She was trembling violently, and stealing furtive glances at the figure as she spoke.

Taking no notice of her agitation I drew a chair to the fireplace, and stood upon it to examine the figure closer. It seemed carved of granite. In certain details it was unlike any gargoyle I had ever seen on the cathedrals of the Continent, being clothed in a kind of shirt, and possessing a semblance of rough thick hair. I thought of the dwarf Quasimodo, as I touched the stone features gingerly. They were death-like in their peculiar coldness.

"I should like to know what cathedral this monster was taken from," I said.

"Here is a list of the things in this room; perhaps it will tell."

She handed me a little leather-bound book. An inventory was written on the first pages in a delicate crabbed hand, as of a scholar with gout.

I ran my eye down the list. This room evidently contained the chief treasures of my uncle's collection:

Madonna, by Murillo.
Crucifix — Veit Stoss.
Faience Candlestick — Henri Deux Ware.
Madonna, by Piero della Francesca.
St. John, by Pinturricchio.
Inlaid spinet, by Martin Pacher.
Indian brasses.
Gargoyle from French Cathedral.

"Yes, but what cathedral?" I questioned mentally. "It would not be easy to rob a cathedral of one of its gargoyles; and there is none in process of demolition offering its carvings to antiquity dealers! Perhaps in process of restoration — an obscure part — a good bribe? No, hardly possible."

The figure of the gargoyle haunted me, even in the full, warm June light which flooded the ancient garden where I walked after my early dinner. I had an impulse to go in and examine the figure more closely, but I was curiously averse to handling it. There was something uncanny in its coldness. That night I went early to my room, intending to read in bed, as was my habit. But I could not fix my mind upon the book, a French novel, a mere bit of puff-paste with sugar ornaments. My eyes would wander to the fearful image above the fireplace. It seemed more alive, more real than the Parisians of the tale, its passion more potent for evil. I blew out the candle to hide its stare, and soon fell asleep.

I awoke in a cold sweat, and with a horrible oppression. The room was flooded with moonlight, and I turned my eyes involuntarily to the gargoyle. Its lips seemed to be moving, as if it were struggling to speak. I had an insane notion that the thing might come crawling down from its place like an monstrous speckled gray spider. I lit a candle hurriedly, my hand shaking with a sickening fear, of which I was mortally ashamed. Then, rising, I drew a chair before the fireplace, and standing on it forced myself to examine the gargoyle closely. I found that it was fastened to the wall by a cement as hard as granite. There was no possibility of removing it. A strange coldness seemed to radiate from the figure, as if it were of ice. I went shuddering back to bed, and thought of the man who had lain there, his dead eyes fixed upon the eyes of the image.

A week of restless nights induced me to change my bedroom. There was no use reasoning with myself. The hideous figure crowded the place with its presence. I felt as if I should lose my breath under that incubus.

The housekeeper asked no questions, but her relief was visible.

On the day that I moved into the blue bed-chamber I wrote to my lawyers in London, asking them if they knew of any full inventory of my late uncle's art-treasures, one which not only catalogued them, but described the means of their acquisition. In reply I received a sealed packet bearing the address "To my Heir." The accompanying letter stated that my uncle had made this catalogue only a month before his death, but had instructed his lawyers not to deliver it "unless my great-nephew proves his

interest in art-objects by asking for such a catalogue." In the event of my not asking for it, they had instructions to burn it after the lapse of a certain period of time.

I opened the packet with a strange conviction that it was more than a mere catalogue. I recognized at once the clear but crabbed handwriting, the same which appeared in the inventory of the "gargoyle room," as I now called it.

The catalogue proved no catalogue after all, but a letter from my uncle to me.

"Dear Nephew, whom I shall never see," it began, "I am soon to die. Why should one go to one's grave bearing the full burden of one's secrets? I am not a believer. I cannot make my confession to any priest. I make it now to you. Yet you may never see this paper. You are to see it only under condition of making a request which you may never make. Yet your interest in the gargoyle —"

I put down the letter, trembling as if with a sudden chill. Why should he fix upon the gargoyle of all his treasures as the one most likely to arouse my curiosity? I hardly dared read on.

"Your interest in the gargoyle may lead you to make inquiries concerning its history. I alone can tell you what it is.

"When I returned from the Continent to England after many years of travel, and established myself in this house, I brought with me a strange creature, a horrible Quasimodo of a dwarf, whom I had saved one day in Padua from the attack of a mob who believed he had stolen a child. 'Here,' I thought, 'is a gargoyle come to life. I will add him to my curiosities.' The monster attached himself to me with dog-like fidelity, and I made of him a kind of fetch-and-carry servant. In the course of our relationship I found that at times he was sullen and malignant, and needed close watching, but I never feared him. His sullen fits were always followed by expressions of violent attachment to my person.

"We had been in this house six months when what I am about to relate took place. By 'we' I mean the gargoyle and the old housekeeper, whom you will find when you come to take possession. She was horribly afraid of the dwarf, and I kept him out of her sight as much as possible. I don't think she ever allowed

herself a good look at him. I never allowed him to go outside the garden walls lest he should frighten women and children.

"Then came a bad night. The dwarf had been sullen; had twice refused to do my bidding. I was in my chair tormented with gout, and at his third refusal to obey me, accompanied by muttered words of insolence, I reached out my crutch and struck him a heavy blow, heavier than I intended. He fell to the floor and lay there squirming like a hurt spider, and all the time looking up at me with a horrible, malignant stare that maddened me. I dealt him another blow. Then he was quite still.

"I lost all sense of pain then. I could walk and even go to the side of the thing where it lay on the floor. I had made myself a murderer — for that carcass!

"What was to be done? I could not hang for such a paltry life. I could not rid myself of the body. I resolved to conceal my crime by revealing it. In my youth I had become familiar with a method of embalming which turns the body, by a kind of petrifying process, into a hard, dense substance. This I employed upon the body of the dwarf, afterwards coating it with a thin layer of cement, which when dry has the consistency of granite. Then I affixed this strange gargoyle to the wall.

"I told my housekeeper that I had sent my dwarf back to Italy. Her relief was great. I kept my new art-treasure covered, as I did many of the other objects in the room, so she suspected nothing. After many years I showed her one day my 'gargoyle from a French cathedral.' The horror in her face, still remembered, compels me to this confession. I trust you to be as faithful in guarding my secret as she has been."



The Black Cat

A Monthly Magazine of Original Short Stories.

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THE BLACK CAT is devoted exclusively to original, unusual, fascinating stories—every number is complete in itself. It publishes no serials, translations, borrowings, or stealings. It pays nothing for the name or reputation of a writer, but the highest price on record for *Stories that are Stories*, and it pays not according to length, but according to strength. To receive attention, manuscripts must be sent unrolled, fully prepaid, and accompanied by addressed and stamped envelope for return. All MSS. are received and returned at their writers' risk.

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A Professional Vampire.*

BY CLAIRE K. ALDEN.



So one of the vast army of solitary women, equally destitute of family, friends and funds, Hope Strong had to make her choice between the competing charms of music, matrimony, the stage, school-teaching, art and affairs, and electing the latter, had taken a course of study in an institution promising its pupils an acquaintance with actual business from the start. So perfectly was this promise fulfilled that when she had finally mastered all the commercial lore that its curriculum had to offer, her education received its finishing touch by a short but decisive course in bankruptcy—not simulated, like the more prosperous transactions of the college, but the real thing. In a word, the institution failed and closed its doors.

Book-keeping had seemed to her to comprehend the essence of business principles, and to this branch she had chiefly devoted her attention. But, thrust into the actual battle of life, she found, much to her surprise, that the number of competent book-keepers in search of employment far exceeded the number of employers desiring such services on any terms, and after a discouraging search she was glad to content herself with a position as cashier in a small lunch

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room, known to its patrons as "The Hole in the Wall." Though small, it was crowded at all hours, at the time when Hope Strong took charge of its till, and her active fingers were kept busy all day and far into the evening in making change in its interests, while her nimble tongue responded to the more or less airy persiflage of its patrons. Her zeal was undoubted, yet in six months, for some unaccountable reason, the patronage had fallen off to such an extent that the proprietor was forced out of business, with the loss of his entire investment.

Meanwhile, Miss Strong had attracted the favorable notice of a small retail merchant who lunched hurriedly every day at the "Hole." His shoe business had so increased that the slate of his primitive beginnings no longer sufficed, and a professional book-keeper had become indispensable; and, learning that Hope held a certificate of the highest proficiency in that science, he engaged her the day following the failure of the restaurant.

Here at least was an opening commensurate with her justifiable ambition, and so she applied herself to the task with assiduity, soon relieving her employer of all concern about counting-room affairs. He was thus enabled to give his whole attention to building up his trade, which responded perversely to his efforts by decreasing in an alarming manner, as was plainly shown by the beautifully formed figures on his books; and the more he exerted himself to increase it the smaller it became, until he was finally driven into bankruptcy.

His assignee pronounced Miss Strong's set of books and financial statement the neatest and most accurate that he had ever seen in the course of a somewhat lengthy experience with moribund business concerns, and his eulogium upon her business capacity, uttered at the first meeting of creditors, so impressed the representative of the great shoe manufacturing concern to which the bankrupt firm was chiefly indebted that he engaged her as one of an increased office staff made necessary by the recent erection of an additional factory building.

In the spacious, quiet offices of the mammoth shoe factory, so different from the petty concerns to whose methods she had been accustomed, Hope Strong had considerable leisure. She perceived that it was by a thorough knowledge of stenography and typewrit-

ing, as well as of book-keeping, that advancement to such desirable places as confidential secretary or business manager might be hoped for, and she accordingly devoted much time to further perfecting herself in those respects. The result of her zeal and industry was inevitable.

The failure of the manufacturers of The Peerless Shoe for Women for \$675,000 was not soon forgotten in the leather district. Before its affairs were effectually wound up — though never to go again — Hope Strong had, as usual, fallen upon both nattily Peerless shod feet behind the grille-work of a widely-known Trust Company, charged with undertaking the shoe company's obsequies.

Her leisure — becoming more ample as she rose in the business world — was largely devoted to literature during her stay with the Trust Company. Poems, tales and sparkling essays upon social subjects sped from her talented pen with the rapidity and precision of projectiles from a Gatling gun. Nor were the results dissimilar. Publications accepting her articles entered forthwith into financial difficulties as into a battle, and papers to which she contributed regularly tottered to their fall.

The disastrous suspension of the Bicontinental Trust Company was, as every one knows, universally attributed to the panic of 1893, but Hope Strong was forced to admit to herself that the true reason was a far different one. As she reviewed her varied career in the clear, cold light of self-knowledge, and, in her methodical counting-house way, set down on the debit side of her account with Business the failure of half a dozen highly prosperous concerns, ranging from a lunch counter to a colossal fiduciary institution, and embracing two weekly newspapers and at least one prominent magazine, it dawned upon her that she had been, all unconsciously, waving a destructive wand over all these enterprises, and that she was, through some mysterious agency of mere personality a devouring vampire, instead of the helpful assistant she had hoped and striven to be.

An unusually tender New England conscience, aroused to action by this appalling discovery, now cried aloud, calling upon her to desist. She listened to its mandates and made no effort to secure work, which, indeed, does not come uninvited to the unemployed immediately after a financial crash.

But when the small amount saved from her earnings was nearly exhausted, the question of ways and means became such a pressing one that Necessity won in the fierce struggle with Conscience. Why, after all, should she not profit, as the specialists in every line profit, by their peculiar gifts? Why not feed on the meat that to others was poison?

The more she dwelt upon the idea the more it possessed her, and the result was that the last of her money was employed to secure the insertion of the following card in the local papers:

PROFESSIONAL VAMPIRE.

A WOMAN, peculiarly gifted with the capacity to wreck business or financial schemes and cast a blight over life in general, desires to widen her sphere of baleful influence. Avail yourself of this exceptional opportunity to punish your enemies, business or social. Numerous undoubted testimonials shown in the bankruptcy records of the past few years. Address "Vampire," this office.

One insertion of this unique advertisement sufficed to establish Hope Strong in her new calling, for she was compelled to use a dress-suit case to carry away the bushel of letters it evoked. All the world flocked as usual to one who claimed the possession of superlatively malignant powers. Thereafter the sign at her door was sufficient to bring a throng of those with enemies to punish — tall and short, stout and lean, men, women and others scarcely more than children — each with a grievance which a tardy Providence had failed to redress. She was kept busy day and night.

While snatching a hasty sandwich during business hours one day some time after embarking upon her new and lucrative career, the Professional Vampire was interrupted by a knock, followed by the abrupt entrance of a young man, neatly attired and wearing a close-cropped, pointed beard. Even without the instrument bag carried in one hand, such a trained physiognomist as Hope Strong would have easily diagnosed her visitor at once as a doctor. That a physician should feel impelled to go outside his own profession for means to blight human life was surprising to the Vampire, but not, apparently, so surprising as the effect which her appearance made upon him.

"You wreck a human life!" he exclaimed, when she had finally succeeded in identifying herself with the maleficent monster he

had come in search of. "Nonsense! Why, such a mite of an innocent child couldn't wreck a raw oyster!"

"Indeed!" replied the Vampire, with the just indignation of a misprized artist. "Just look over my press-notices, please. Read these slips from the Clipping Bureau — all my own cases, I assure you — those I have sent to the divorce and bankruptcy courts, the insane asylum and the grave. 'Couldn't wreck a raw oyster,' you think? My dear sir, I was born a moral vampire, and I can ruin any person upon whom I concentrate my influence."

"It was a girl" — the Doctor said at length, after duly weighing the Vampire's assurances — "a girl, fair like yourself, who undertook a little amateur vampire business in trying to wreck my life — by jilting me. I was engaged to be married to her, and between me and my wedding day there stood nothing but the trifling obstacle of an income which I looked forward with reasonable confidence to overcoming in the course of a year or two. But she was ever of a hasty and impetuous nature and — to be brief — she was married yesterday to a hated competitor who by dint of practices that it would be unprofessional in me to adequately describe is rolling, in a limited sense, in the gold that has so far been denied me. Now, if some disaster could be arranged to overtake this unworthy pair, I should regard no fee within reason as excessive."

Hope could not help noticing as the doctor talked that the bereavement he had experienced had by no means blinded him to the charms of her sex. Through the studious bedside manner that he professionally maintained there shone a warm personal appreciation of her attractions, and she secretly rejoiced in a pleasant consciousness of being particularly well groomed and becomingly adorned. In this expansive mood she readily undertook his commission.

"I shall have to visit these people of course," she stated. "You must furnish me with their address and a few points as to their habits and tastes. I will undertake the rest. Her picture is in that locket on your watch-guard, I suppose."

The Doctor, blushing, handed it to her. She noted with a smile of approval that the photograph of the jilt was not nearly as good-looking as herself.

As he was about to go, the Doctor paused on the threshold.

"Are you quite sure that, in employing you, I shall not also fall under your blighting influence?" he hesitatingly inquired. "I'm just building up a very good practice."

"That is your own risk," answered the Vampire coolly. "None of my clients has ever seemed to consider that possibility. However, I will resign the case, if you wish."

"Oh, no, indeed!" he hurriedly exclaimed; "do not desert me now. I feel that I need your services. There is something in the atmosphere of this room—something in your very presence—that breathes hope. I wish your occupation were not so obnoxious. Personally, I should like to cultivate your acquaintance."

"Beware!" said the Vampire, mischievously, pointing to her sign, a seething cauldron, inscribed, "Double, double, toil and trouble." "The less you have to do with a witch the better. Still, in a professional way, I shall be obliged to see you occasionally. Come next Thursday, say, and I will report progress."

But Doctor More did not wait till the appointed time. It was not later than the following Tuesday evening—after the Vampire's office-hours—that he called. Hope Strong received him with some trepidation. She would have to admit that she had accomplished little. She had visited his rival in the character of a patient, and during her visit the Doctor had cut himself severely with a surgical knife and a second-story worker had taken advantage of the ensuing confusion to rifle his wife's dressing-table of all her jewels, but beyond these trifles nothing had been done.

Doctor More noticed her nervousness and depression.

"Put on that golf cape," he said, in his authoritative, professional manner, "and come out for a walk. You need exercise in the open air, and you must allow me to prescribe."

Hope demurred.

"It's all very well to prescribe," she said, "but a physician is not expected to administer his remedies personally."

"Nevertheless, you will permit me to superintend the cure I have recommended," replied the Doctor, taking her hands in a mock struggle over the cloak.

"What tiny hands!" he pursued. "Why did not Providence deal me a hand like that?" And he sighed significantly.

Hope Strong laughed. The walk proved very pleasant. She

forgot her baleful profession, her failure and disappointment — everything. When she remembered at parting to apologize for her lack of success in carrying out the Doctor's wishes, he interrupted her.

"I fear it is entirely my own fault," he said. "I understand that in such cases the active mental coöperation of the principal is essential, and I have not aided you. The truth is, I haven't been thinking of the matter at all. Something else has quite occupied my mind." And he sighed again with unmistakable meaning.

The Vampire's artistic sense was stimulated by this subtle flattery, and she entered upon the case with renewed ardor. The cut upon the rival doctor's hand, from a disregarded trifle, developed dangerous symptoms. Amputation was threatened, and while this disaster was averted, a long illness, followed by an enforced exile in Southern California, cost him the greater part of his practice, most of which was secured by Doctor More, up the street. His wife, the jilt, a purely mercenary person, left him and went upon the stage, and is now starring in "East Lynne" and "The Hidden Hand" in a circuit of small towns in Maine.

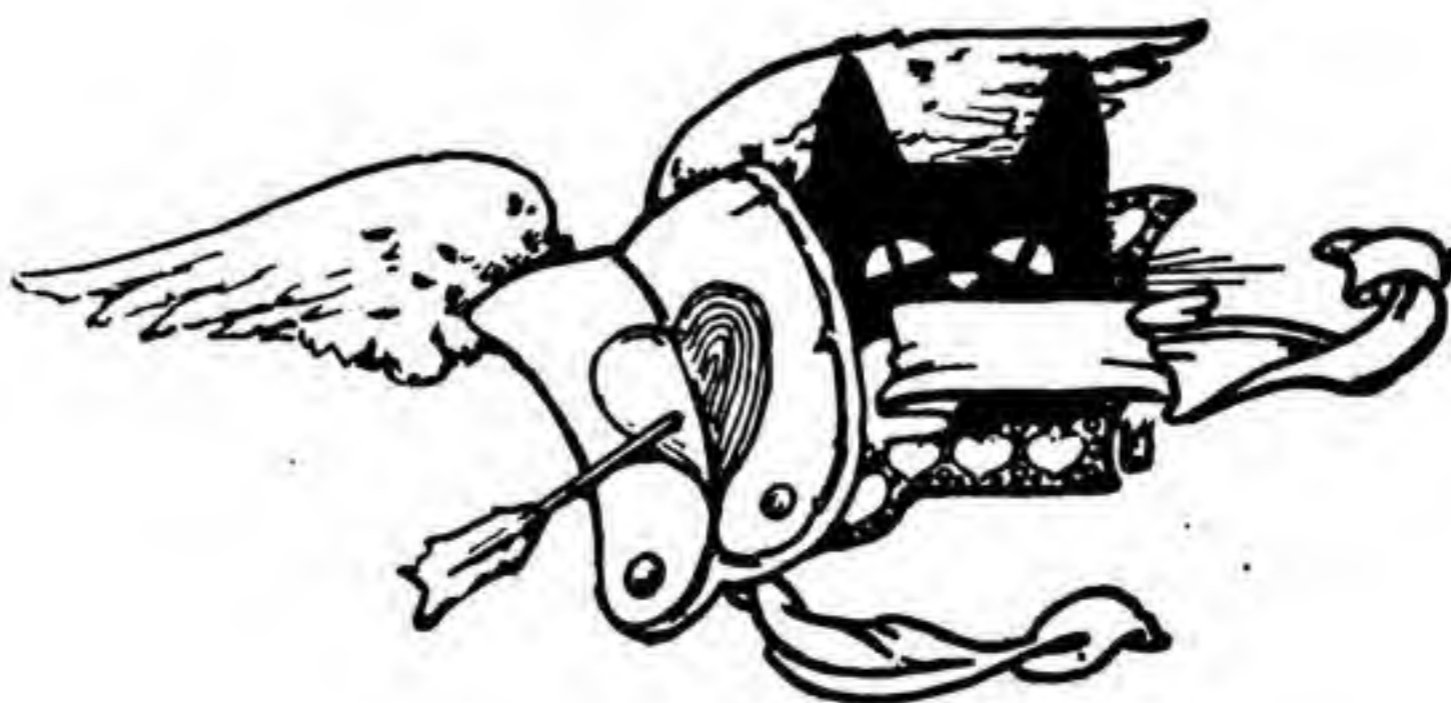
Doctor More's visit to ask for his bill was soon followed by another to settle it, and that by a third, without coherent reason, and still other and more frequent calls, that took up the time formerly devoted by the Vampire to a now rapidly dwindling stream of vindictive men and women.

By Christmas week the current of her clients had entirely ceased to flow — perhaps owing to the prevalence of a seasonable feeling of good-will to men. As Hope stood musing on the eve of the holiday, she heard an unfamiliar noise in the hall, like the working of a tool. The metallic sound continued for some moments, seeming to proceed from the outside of her own door, which she therefore opened suddenly. There stood the Doctor, with Hope's queer sign in one hand and a screw-driver in the other.

"Professional Vampire!" he exclaimed, tossing the beautiful glass sign upon the floor and breaking it. "You are an impostor. I charge you with malpractice. You have entirely mistaken your calling, for I have proved you to be the sweetest, most comforting and good-fortune bearing little woman in the world!"

So in that wise the ex-professional Vampire became soon after

Mrs. Hope More, a useful member of society and a physician's help-mate. At the risk of popularizing a practice now generally admitted to be unhygienic and ill-advised, it must be stated as a curious scientific fact that with the first kiss of betrothal all traces of Hope Strong's malign psychic power wholly and irrecoverably disappeared.



The Cold Storage Baby.*

BY EVA L. OGDEN.



IN the summer of 1892, the heir of the property of which I was in charge came down from Canada to talk over matters with me and receive some of the articles in my custody. We made an inventory of these, and some he packed in his satchel along with his law books, to carry back with him. Some, however, he decided to leave with me until certain questions relative to their disposal should be settled. Among these articles was a small but valuable diamond in a green velvet case. He informed me that there was some dispute about the title to this jewel, and that he preferred leaving it in my charge until he had completed some negotiations by which he might become its possessor. We examined it carefully, then replaced it in the green velvet case, and I myself locked it up in the heavily iron-bound oaken box, about eighteen inches long and six inches high, which answered for the Conyngham family jewel-box.

Five months thereafter, Mr. Conyngham wrote saying that the negotiations were completed and asking me to send him the diamond. I went to the safe, took out the casket, and opened it. The diamond was gone!

I could not believe my eyes. I examined every nook and corner of the casket. I had carried the key on my own person since the moment I had locked the box in the presence of Mr. Conyngham, and yet there was no sign of the jewel. I took out every article in the box. There were various heirlooms — a necklace of pearls and diamonds, an exquisite miniature of the time of the First Empire, ear-rings and brooches of finely wrought gold, knee-buckles set with brilliants — such things as accumulate in any old family of wealth and position. I took out my copy of the inventory and carefully compared it with the contents of the

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box. Everything was there except the diamond. I locked up the box once more and sat down to do a little hard thinking, and then I wrote as follows :

MR. S. G. CONYNGHAM,

Dear Sir : — As you and I closed the jewel casket together it seems to me advisable that we should open it together. I therefore await your coming, which I trust will be soon.

Your obedient servant,

ELLIOTT STRONG.

“There,” said I to myself, “that’ll fix him. “If he doesn’t come, but sends word he can’t for any reason under heaven, I’ll know he is guilty. If he plays a bluff and comes I’ll watch him open the box, and if he doesn’t betray himself to me then I’m a cabbage-head, that’s all.”

Two days after came a telegram from Conyngham announcing day and hour when he would be on hand. Promptly at the appointed time he appeared. He came directly to the house, greeted me with his usual cordiality, the cordiality of a son of the house toward a man more than twice his age, and the trusted friend and adviser of his family for thirty years, and went with me immediately into my office. I opened the safe, took out the box and handed it to him. He fitted the key to the lock, turned it, lifted the lid and looked up at me with such surprise, dismay and horror written on his face that I sprang forward involuntarily, exclaiming, “Good Heavens, Conyngham ! What is it ? ”

He pointed down into the box. I gazed and gasped. There, enclosed in an inner box of glass, lay a tiny, beautifully shaped living baby. There seemed to be some sort of breathing apparatus connected with it, for I could see bubbles of air passing continually into the inner box. On one side of the glass lay a piece of yellow parchment. On it were these words in a queer, but legible hand :

OCTOBER 17, 1863.

To him who may open this box : I am a benefactor of the human race. I have solved a great and momentous problem. After years of trial and experiment I have perfected my devices and learned how to preserve the young of the human species in cold storage until they are wanted, when they can be taken from their receptacles and given to an anxiously waiting world. Henceforth no family need suffer, as now, from an alternate superabundance and scarcity of children. No family, unless utterly and irreclaimably bad, need entirely die out.

When children are plenty, and, as usual at such times, of better quality both physically and mentally, let a few be carefully put up for future family use, to draw upon when the supply is both scant and poor. The advantages of my invention are patent to the meanest understanding.

It would be well to put this child immediately into an incubator and summon an experienced physician to oversee the process of restoration to a normal state. If it live — but I will not write an if. It will live, and live to demonstrate to an idiotic world the greatness of

TERAH FAIRWEATHER.

I read this document aloud, in bewildered amazement. Conyngham was striding up and down the room, fairly blazing.

"Poor little beggar!" he cried. "Made the subject of a beastly experiment by some bloody saw-bones! Strong, how long do you suppose he's been in there?"

"Lord! how do I know?" I groaned. "This paper'd make it twenty-seven years, and it says, put him in an incubator immediately. Have you got such a thing as an incubator handy? If we don't put him in, and he dies, some fool policeman will arrest us as accessories after the fact and there will be five experts to swear that that parchment is in your handwriting and four that it's in mine. It stands us in hand to move lively."

"Incubator?" groaned Conyngham. "What do I know about incubators and where to find them in this beastly town? Gad! I'd look pretty trotting after an incubator at ten o'clock at night with the story that I had just found a baby in my jewel-box! Any self-respecting policeman would say, 'Them as hides can find.'" And by the way, how did he get there? I'll take my oath he wasn't there the last time I saw the inside of that box!"

"If I wasn't an old lawyer and didn't know better than to swear to anything, I'd say the same thing," I answered. "But I tell you we've got to move lively. I know how bad I could make this look for any one else in our position. Call a cab, will you? I'll shut this thing up."

"Don't!" cried Conyngham in alarm. "You'll suffocate the little chap."

"Conyngham," I answered, "that parchment, if the date is correct, declares that he has been in here twenty-seven years. Half an hour more won't hurt him," and I locked the box.

Five minutes afterward we were driving furiously toward the nearest hospital. We asked about incubators and were directed to a place where, we were informed, there were several in operation under the supervision of experts. It took ten minutes more to reach the place.

Conyngham, younger than I, sprang out first and rushed in. He came back in a few moments, eager and excited.

"Hurry up, Strong!" he cried. "They have half a dozen running here and I've picked out a good one," and without waiting for an answer he ran up the steps again.

As I jumped from the cab, box in hand, my foot caught in some way and I fell forward, striking heavily against a passing pedestrian, while the box flew out of my hand. The man caught me, saving me from the pavement, and picking up the box, restored it to me.

"Lord!" I cried, "I hope I haven't killed it!" and involuntarily I raised it to my ear and shook it gently with a faint hope that I should hear a cry.

"What is it?" asked the stranger, curiously.

"Oh, nothing, nothing!" I answered. "Thank you much, sir, for your kindness," and I went up the steps of the hospital, gingerly.

Dr. Aler came forward to meet me.

"I understand you have a child which you wish put into an incubator," he said.

"Yes," I answered; "but it isn't exactly our baby. We found it, as I suppose Mr. Conyngham has told you."

"Come into my private room, gentlemen," remarked Dr. Aler, looking curiously at the box, "and let me see the child."

We followed him into his private room. We laid the box on the table and all three bent eagerly over it as Conyngham unlocked it, and, as he raised the lid, before our eyes lay a pearl and diamond necklace, a miniature of the time of the First Empire, ear-rings and brooches of finely wrought gold, knee buckles set with brilliants, a handsome diamond, lying in an open green velvet case — and that was all.

Conyngham and I straightened ourselves with a cry; Dr. Aler looked at us both with judicial haughtiness.

"Do I understand, gentlemen," he said, "that you *found* this box?"

"N-no, not exactly," said Conyngham. "The box is mine."

"Ah, the box is yours! And the jewels?"

"The jewels are mine, too!"

"Ah! and what did you find?"

"We found the baby."

"Where did you find that?"

"In the box."

"In that box, along with the jewels?"

"Oh, no, instead of the jewels. It was in cold storage, don't you know? To be kept till it should be wanted, you know."

Conyngham was committed for examination as to his sanity. I was committed, as I knew I would be, for conspiracy. It took a week to straighten out matters, and there are two men that I will get even with, if I live long enough.

When it was all over, and Conyngham and I had got into my den and locked the door behind us:

"Strong," said he, "I swear I saw a baby in that box."

"Conyngham," I answered, "if I were not a lawyer, and did not know better than to swear to anything, so would I. What's that paper on the floor by your foot?"

He picked it up. It was the letter of Terah Fairweather.



Auxons.*

BY JULIA TRUITT BISHOP.



RICHARD FANNING threw down the morning paper and lay out at length on the silk-draped lounge. His hands were clasped back of his head. He was staring at the ceiling with a look of unutterable boredom.

The new valet moved a chair slightly and cleared his throat discreetly. He was but a new valet, and doubtless he felt that to look at that face just now was like listening at a keyhole.

"Don't knock the furniture about, if you please, Edouard," suggested Fanning, not turning his eyes from the ceiling. "Upon my honor, I believe my nerves are going."

"Has Monsieur any orders?" asked the new valet softly. It was the softness of his tones that had led Fanning to engage him. His former valet had possessed a hoarse croak that made excellent service of none effect. Of what value was money if one could not buy pleasing voice as well as ready hand?

"Oh, no orders," said Fanning with the same unchanging stare. "I am tired, Edouard — deadly tired. If I knew what to do, I give you my word I'd do it."

Edouard stood respectfully near, looking down.

"Why, for instance, does not Monsieur travel?" he asked with quiet suggestion.

A tired smile curled one corner of Fanning's mouth.

"Because, for instance, my good Edouard," he replied, "I have travelled until I am more tired of that than of anything else."

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* The writer of this story received a cash prize of \$100 in THE BLACK CAT story contest ending February 26, 1902.

Talk of travel to a man that knows Port Said by heart, and could find his way blindfold about Teheran! Try something else, man."

Edouard laid his hand on a chair-back.

"But while Monsieur has travelled, he has, perchance, never seen Auxons," he suggested again.

"Auxons? what is that?" asked Fanning, turning his eyes for a moment toward the face of the quiet Edouard.

"It is but a little town, Monsieur — a little town in the mountains of my country," Edouard hastened to assure him; "but it is very old, and is not without interest."

Then for the first time Fanning laughed.

"Now, why should you imagine," he said, "that I have any desire to see every little old garlic-smelling French town on the map — or *not* on it? Give me my coat, Edouard — and don't be an idiot."

Receiving his coat, and being duly brushed, he went down to his club, from whose almost empty windows he stared vacantly at the street outside and was consumed with weariness. No one was there whom he cared to meet, and he avoided the smiling old club Nestor with a haste that was almost rudeness. He was on the point of leaving when a certain Mr. Clermont strolled in and met him with evident pleasure. Mr. Clermont had brought European letters of introduction to the club three days ago.

"Well met!" cried Mr. Clermont. "I have wished to see you to say good-bye, as it may be that I shall leave New York for my own land to-morrow. And when shall I see you in Paris?"

"I do not think of going soon," said Fanning, with a weary smile that was scarcely at the trouble to smile at all. "You see, I have visited Paris so many times —"

"Ah, but have you seen Auxons?" asked Mr. Clermont with enthusiasm. "Depend upon it, my friend, it is worth the visit to France merely to see Auxons."

A flash of interest lit Fanning's eyes. Twice within an hour, this place of which he had never heard before had been mentioned by men of very different stations in life. He would have asked further, but at that moment Mr. Clermont was called away, and he did not see him again.

The unutterable dulness of the club drove him out, and in his

wanderings he passed a public library, hesitated and turned back. A dark young man who seemed to be a stranger went up the marble steps after him. Fanning chose a book and sat down. Sometimes a book might be found that was fairly endurable.

A while later he was aroused by a voice at his side.

"Pardon, Monsieur," the dark young man was saying in French, "but will you assist me in finding if there is a paper here, published in the little town of Auxons?"

For a moment Fanning was dumb with amazement. Then he courteously arose and began the search. But there was no such paper, as he presently communicated to the stranger.

"Ah," said the young man with a look of disappointment; "doubtless that is because Auxons is not one of the large cities. You have, by chance, seen it, Monsieur? True, it is very small, but it is very old, and not without interest, Monsieur."

The repetition of Edouard's words gave Fanning a sudden, uneasy sense that all this had happened long ago, and that he knew what was going to happen next. What did happen next was that the young man disappeared with a murmur of thanks, and that he restored the book to its place on the shelves.

"Why should I?" he kept asking scornfully of the Self that was already resolving upon a certain thing; and the Self replied, "Why not?"

And perhaps it was because there was no reason for doing it that he did it.

"Edouard," he said, half an hour later, "do you know how to reach this Auxons of which you speak?"

"Assuredly, Monsieur," said Edouard, after the slightest pause.

"Then we will start to-morrow," said Fanning. "There's money—take it, and manage the trip, and spare me the worries."

Edouard did not even raise his eyes. There were times when Edouard was very impassive.

"Monsieur will find everything ready," he said very quietly.

.
A little branch of the Loire tumbled noisily down a gorge; a little old, old village held a scanty foothold on the slanting edge of it. Higher up on the slope, with the torrent a hundred feet down and the cliff a thousand feet up, clung the half-ruined château.

Fanning stood beneath the château and looked up and looked down.

"And this is Auxons!" he said. There was a note of contempt in his voice. He had come such a way — to see this!

"Monsieur is looking upon an old town," said Edouard in the very quiet tones Fanning had liked. "Its foundations were laid by the Gauls — it was old in the days of Cæsar, Monsieur. The château has sheltered Clovis and Charlemagne, and has been the abode of one family since before their day."

"Judging from its looks, they have fallen upon evil times," said Monsieur indifferently.

"It would seem so, Monsieur," said Edouard. "Does Monsieur wish that I tell the château's story in the château itself? One must be careful of the steps — see how the stones fall away! This is the chapel, Monsieur — newer than the remainder of the château, and yet very old — so old that it, too, falls to decay."

They stood in the ruined chapel, its walls crumbling, its roof sagging. At the end was a great stained-glass window, almost entire, but the ivy had grown over it on the outside so that most of the light was shut off. The old chapel would have been in darkness, but that once in a while, the leaves, stirred by the wind, parted and let a dull glow through, as though it shone from the heart of an opal.

After a little, Fanning saw that the dark masses on the floor were heaps of stones fallen from the thick walls. After a little more he saw that the dark something beneath the winking glow of the great window was a tomb, with a marble slab closing it.

Edouard stood near him, very quiet.

"It is not a pleasant story, that of the château," he said, when Fanning had turned his eyes upon him and waited for him to speak. "It was, as I told Monsieur, a very old family — very old and very noble. The men have been great men always — great statesmen, great generals, what you will; — and the time was when they helped kings with their money. Once their lands swept down that valley yonder, and as far as the eye could see in three directions from this hill-top. But the Revolution took away much, Monsieur, and it was only because Auxons was so far away and hidden that it left them even the château."

Monsieur was inclined to find the story a little dull. He rested one foot on a heap of stones and lit a cigar, encircling the flame of the match with his hands. The yellow light, striking up into his face, showed how dull he found the story.

"For a hundred years, Monsieur, they have been poor," Edouard went on, after the match had died out. "Some of them, one may suppose, died broken-hearted; but at last there was left only a broken old man, with his grandchildren. One of these was a girl."

For a single moment Edouard paused again; then the low, inflexible voice went on:

"One of them was a girl, and she was in a convent, being educated. But at last the fortunes fell so low that she must be brought home; and then her brothers, grown desperate, left her with the old man and sold themselves as mercenaries to whatever government would buy."

"Is this a continued story, Edouard?" asked Monsieur. "Because if it is, I will take the remainder of it at that little hole-in-the-wall you were pleased to call an inn."

"Monsieur will find that it is near the end," said Edouard with a voice that was like velvet. "Monsieur has but to note that, the brothers being gone away, the old man died; and that the girl, being left penniless, was glad to take a position with an English family as governess. Monsieur has but to remember, also, that she was just out of a convent, with the face of a Madonna and the eyes of an infant."

Monsieur spent some silent moments remembering this statement. During these moments the point of fire on the end of his cigar died out.

"Did you mention the name of this — this family, Edouard?" he asked carelessly. It was a carelessness that was somewhat marred by a certain thickness of utterance, as of a dry tongue.

A light sound at the other end of the chapel drew his eyes. He saw two men moving slowly up through the shadows.

"The girl," said Edouard, "was Mademoiselle Adrienne Louise de la Vivaseur. Monsieur will, perhaps, be kind enough to reflect if he has ever heard such a name."

Monsieur had, apparently, not heard such a name. There was

silence. The ivy leaves parted and shot down a crimson ray upon the tomb.

"Monsieur finds the story more interesting?" asked Edouard of the velvet voice. "Monsieur will remember that she was the daughter of kings and nobles, and that blood of the Crusaders ran in her veins. Yet her brothers found her one morning lying beside that tomb, dead, with a dead babe in her arms."

The two shadowy figures moved up a step nearer, but Monsieur did not heed them. He was staring as if fascinated at the tomb with the spot of crimson dancing upon it.

There was silence so deep and so long that it might have lasted for years.

When Monsieur moved, it was toward the tomb. The spot of red wavered and trembled upon a carved lettering.

"To One Forgotten," he read.

He still had command of himself.

"They placed that above her? Yet she is not forgotten," he said to Edouard.

"Monsieur takes that for her tomb?" asked Edouard, softly. "But indeed, she was not buried there. She lay down beside it to die, but the tomb was not for her. It is reserved, Monsieur, for the man who played with the little convent girl, and sent her home to die."

To eyes accustomed to the shadows, it could be seen that Monsieur's face had whitened. Yet he spoke lightly. He even smiled.

"'To One Forgotten,'" he repeated, looking Edouard in the face. "But he is not forgotten. Perhaps he is not even dead."

"Monsieur," said Edouard, softly, "he is both!"

Edouard had stooped and touched something at his feet, and the slab of marble was mysteriously lifted and swung away. Thick darkness lay within.

Monsieur was aware that the two shadows had closed up, and were on either hand. He turned his eyes from one to the other of them.

Clermont, of the club, and the dark young stranger of the library.

A sense came upon him that the club and the library were

worlds of space and thousands of years away — that the only realities were these three dark figures and the tomb by whose cold side the daughter of kings and Crusaders had lain down to die.

— It could not be more cold within than it had been without.

— And yet he had not meant —

“I see,” he said, wearily, at the end of that long pause. . “No doubt you would prefer that I should do this thing voluntarily, Monsieur de la Vivaseur?”

“We should greatly prefer it, Monsieur,” said that one who had lately been Edouard.

Monsieur stepped into the tomb and sat down.

“You won’t object to my smoking?” he asked, taking out a fresh cigar and a match. “It will shorten things, maybe.”

Monsieur de la Vivaseur’s face was set.

“Adieu, Monsieur,” he said, giving another touch to that mysterious something on the floor.

There was the glow of a cigar in the darkness as the stone swung back and settled into its place.

At the farther end of the chapel a door opened, and a bent figure found its way among the stones.

“Have you brought the cement, Jean?” asked Monsieur de la Vivaseur.

“It is here, Your Grace,” said the old man.

“Seal up the tomb — it has been opened for the last time,” said Monseigneur; and the three went out, without looking back.

The old man listened for a furtive moment, with his ear at the edge of the marble slab. Silence.

Then he took the cement and sealed up every crevice, and went his way.

The red glow from the window leaped from the tomb to the floor, and crept along it, over the fallen stones, and up the wall, as though it were eager to get away. Down among the shadows lay the dim gray shape given over to the use of One Forgotten.



The White Death.*

BY DON MARK LEMON.



HE was an American. He had come to the country in search of gold. He should have remained on his estate at home in Virginia. But no, he must come to South America and prospect in Tarantula Valley. He proposed it first to his Mexican guide, Lozo. Lozo grew white about the lips, despite his tawny color, and shook his head.

"Why not?" the American questioned.

"The White Death, señor; it is there!"

"Where — in Tarantula Valley?"

"Yes, señor."

"What is the White Death?"

Lozo drew his lips firmly together and again shook his head. Evidently the White Death was something to be silent about, as well as to fear.

"Is it a pestilence of some kind?" the American questioned.

"No, señor."

"Is it a snake?"

"No, señor."

"A wild beast?"

"No, señor."

"Is it death from poisonous gases?"

"No, señor."

"Is it death by the hand of men — banditti, for instance?"

"No, señor."

"Hunger? thirst?"

"No, señor."

"Then what the devil is the White Death?"

The American spoke angrily, but Lozo made no reply. He only drew his lips tighter together and looked more frightened.

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The fellow — half savage that he was — feared he might draw the anger of the White Death upon himself should he describe its nature.

"Queer!" the American muttered, greatly perplexed. Then he tried policy. "Come, I'll double your pay if you'll act as guide."

"No, señor."

"Treble it."

"No, señor."

"Give you ten dollars a day — American gold."

"No, señor."

The American considered awhile. Then he said, "That decides me; I'll prospect Tarantula Valley and see if I can't stack a mortgage on this White Death — and I'll go it alone."

The Mexican was a Catholic. He crossed himself and looked unhappy. There was no reason he shouldn't look unhappy. He liked the American, in his rough way; besides the American's pay was good — and certain. And now the American was going to meet the White Death!

Having made up his mind to prospect Tarantula Valley at any cost, the Virginian looked about for another guide than Lozo, but his labor was wasted. No one would accompany him on his proposed prospecting tour, nor explain what was meant by the White Death.

Was it something so strange, so far removed from common nature, that human speech could frame no description of it? Or did the superstitious villagers fear that they might draw the anger of the White Death — whatever it was — upon themselves should they go into particulars?

The next day the American set out alone for Tarantula Valley, very curious and not at all nervous. He was well provisioned — one burro bore his supply of food, another his blankets and mining outfit — and well armed. He didn't reason that there might be something lurking in the Valley before him against which his Winchester would be no protection — some Shape such as might haunt the Infernal pool and make it more hideous than even a diseased poet could imagine. No; he didn't reason at all.

Tarantula Valley, in appearance, was a pleasant place, with a

wooded river flowing through it and a wooded lake, or large pool, in its centre. The American thought what a paradise it would be in which to dream away the rest of his life with One by his side who was waiting for him in Virginia.

Yet, despite the sylvan charm of the Valley, the American soon grew lonely, for there really wasn't much society about. To be sure, there were the two burros, an occasional snake, a few horned toads, and some buzzards; but, apart from these, the dumb creatures to be seen were not at all sociable. Not sociable, at least, like the buzzards. *They*, in one particular, were almost as good as human society, taking, as they did, a very evident interest in the American's state of health.

Then, too, there was a half-wild burro in the Valley. At least a half-wild burro passed through the vale one day and for a few minutes fell in with the pack animals of the American. Of course dumb beasts can't talk with one another, yet, somehow, after that half-wild burro had fooled awhile around the ears of the two tame burros, as a man fools around the ear of a friend to whom he is giving a tip, those two tame burros, in company with the half-wild one, made such quick tracks from Tarantula Valley that to the astonished American the animals seemed like three dirty streaks of light making for the hills ten miles beyond. Evidently the creatures were frightened at something — not at something they saw, but at something they feared they might see.

And what was still more curious, there wasn't an animal in Tarantula Valley that didn't appear half dead from fright. Actually the American came to the conclusion that the dumb habitants of the Valley were all so subdued by fear that they hadn't the sense left with which to migrate.

But, strangest of all — of which fact there could be no doubt, as the Virginian had the witness of his own eyes — were the collections of bones scattered over the Valley, and especially about the lake. On his first day in the vale he had lighted on one of these collections of bones. He examined it. It looked like a little open-air cosmopolitan graveyard. Within a circle about twenty feet in diameter was collected the skeleton of a burro, the skeleton of a buzzard, the skeleton of a large wild animal of the cat tribe, the skeleton of a cow, several skeletons the species of which the

American couldn't determine, and last, but not least, the skeleton of a man.

It was evident that some wild animal had lately ravaged in that part of the country, gathering into one feeding ground the prey of a month or so.

The second day he spent in the Valley the American lighted on a second collection of bones. It was much like the first, only the human skeleton bleaching in the sun was that of a woman and not a man. At this the Virginian got very angry, though without especial reason. The woman, surely, couldn't have died any harder than the man.

The third day he lighted on a third collection of bones, and the skeleton of a man and woman lay side by side. With this he began to wonder seriously what manner of thing it was that had turned the Valley into a charnel. Was it a great panther of some kind—or a huge snake? Or—but no, it couldn't be a man. That was something too hideous to believe. And a man or band of men it was not.

Then he struck gold. He slipped into the river one morning, scraping the bank in his fall, and there in the river-bank he found the gold. It was placer and so rich that in less than a week he got enough to satisfy a woman, let alone a man. Then he laid off a day and went down the river in search of game, and, without especially looking for it, he found a fourth collection of bones which, from its condition, seemed to be the latest feeding ground of the Thing—the White Death.

Now, when a man has a cool million in sight—or thinks he has—he feels more secure from personal danger than when he has little or nothing, so the American decided to hang about that fourth collection of bones and try to bag something.

Straightway he found a suitable spot beside a rock, and, leaning his Winchester within easy reach, proceeded to watch. About thirty feet distant was a huge collection of boulders; perhaps hidden in the wide fissures of these boulders was the thing he sought.

For a half hour, or, rather, forty minutes, the American gave his whole attention to the business in hand, then, nothing appearing, he got tired and began to scratch his sweetheart's name in the

dirt at his feet. It was a pleasant thing to do, though, to be sure, rather foolish for a man on watch — for Something — he didn't know exactly what.

When he had finished writing Her name in the dust, then his own name, and then had traced around both a rude figure more like spades than the human heart, he looked up.

At first he thought there was something wrong with his eyes and he winked them several times. Then he thought his brains were tangled, and so he multiplied several figures mentally, but, getting the right answers, for four times four *is* sixteen, six times three *is* eighteen, and eight times seven *is* fifty-six, he concluded it was something else than his reason at fault. Then he reached out his hand for his Winchester, but desisted before touching the rifle, for he chose rather to watch the Thing squatted upon the pile of rock than handle an uninteresting weapon. But perhaps he had no choice in the matter — perhaps he couldn't do other than watch. The Thing was so very fascinating.

It was looking directly at him — the Thing on the rocks — and, though it made not the slightest noise to attract his attention, there was no reason he should not see it. For it was as big as an ox lying down. But it wasn't an ox. Neither was it anything like an ox.

It was a gigantic spider or tarantula, large as a full-grown tiger, with long white hair all over its huge and horrible body!

"Why," the American began. Evidently he was going to say, "Why, if I had known of such a thing as that around here, I would have stayed away." But he got no further than "Why," for it was more fascinating watching the Thing than talking or thinking.

Then, again, the American tried to reach for his Winchester, but the light that came out of the eyes of the squat Thing upon the rocks paralyzed his arm. Or perhaps it was only surprise that deprived him of the power of motion, for he well knew that there is no such thing as hypnotic power in the eye of man or beast.

Then suddenly the long white hair of the Thing began to tremble and the American felt as if his whole body were blistering from some intense heat, and, as the eyes of the White Death stood out farther from its horrible head, and its great legs drew closer

together for the thirty-foot spring, the Virginian began to cry — to whimper — and a single word dropped from his maudlin lips. That word, puerile enough for a strong man, was “Mother!” The face of the American’s mother had suddenly flashed before his soul somewhere in the back of his head. The face had the mouth of his sweetheart. He should have known, for he had kissed the mouth several times before leaving Virginia.

Then the squat Thing upon the rock began to tremble throughout and its long white hair to shiver and its legs to collect closer and closer. Whereupon the American began to laugh foolishly, like a baby, and beat and paddle his hands in the dust, and his body grew flaccid and flabby and his breast sank down into his stomach.

Then, like a flash of white light struck out of the rock, the squat Thing leapt thirty feet through the hot air, and, as it sunk its horrible fangs into the neck of the American, his lips were bowed down into his sweetheart’s name in the dust, and he babbled, “‘Now — I lay me down — to sleep.’”







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The Shortstory Publishing Company, Boston, Mass.

Upside-down-ville.*

BY GEORGE H. HEBARD.



It will be useless to search in atlases for the situation of Upside-down-ville. It is not in the books for the reason that it has no boundaries. Boundaries denote ownership, and none but the poorest and most reckless Upside-down-villians burden themselves with real estate, and even they deny it. Hence no surveys are ever made, there are no division lines, no maps.

We journeyed into the place on foot. With a vacation of but two weeks we could not afford to spend time on the steam cars, which go at a speed of only twenty miles per day, and are therefore seldom used except by those having superfluity of time. To such, car riding commends itself because of the freedom from dust, and absolute safety of life and limb, such a thing as a railroad accident never having been known. Travellers in haste generally walked and had their baggage sent by ox-team express. We did likewise. (I use the word "we" in the editorial sense, meaning myself, Thomas Jones.)

Soon after midnight the town showed up in the distance and we heard the sound of wheels on the pavements and the hum of factories. It seemed strange then, but we learned later that Upside-down-villians work only at night and sleep through the day. Soon we could see carts rolling over the sidewalks and joined the crowds walking on the greensward in the middle of the road.

Accosting one person we asked to be directed to the residence of John Smith.

"John Smith? What a curious name! Never heard anything like it before."

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* The writer of this story received a cash prize of \$100 in THE BLACK CAT story contest ending February 26, 1902.

A directory was hanging on a tree close by. The person took it down and looked through the list beginning with "S." But Smith was not in it. Then we were asked if John was a married woman.

"John, I said. So of course he's a man."

"How can that be? John is certainly a woman's name. By and by you will be claiming that James and Peter are men. Oh, no. Don't talk that way to me. Our men all have men's names like Lulu and Daisy and Alice."

We returned to another and inquired for John.

"I think it is Johanna Smith you want. He is a foreigner from the United States, and claimed when he came here that John was a man's name in his country. However, he finally changed it to Johanna and is so called here."

"But there was not even one Smith in your directory, although the book is very large. He was probably overlooked in the canvass."

"I hardly think it can be an error, for our canvassers are very careful. As we all move at least twice a year, and those who can afford it much oftener, we are all anxious to see to it ourselves that every new name or place of residence is recorded."

"Why do you move so often? Excuse me, but is it because it is cheaper than paying rent?"

"Not at all. Don't you know that if we were to stay in any place for a long time people would begin to claim we owned it? To many of us that would mean disaster. It would overburden us with taxes and public duties. And money would accumulate until we were overwhelmed and perhaps driven to suicide. So I hardly think it is for that reason that Johanna's name does not appear. More likely it is because he is a man. As a usual thing only women's names are in the directory, they being in trade, manufacture and the like. Unless a man is engaged in active business, as he seldom is, there would be no use in cumbering the list with the name of one of the weaker sex."

"How strange!"

"By the way, who are you?"

"Thomas Jones, if you please."

"Jones? Another remarkable name! Never heard anything

like it! And 'Thomas' too. How harsh it seems to call such a beautiful lady Thomas."

"Oh, come now, don't 'lady' me. I'm a man, every inch, and don't you forget it."

"A man, and your name is Thomas? Can it be that you also come from the United States?"

"You state the case exactly. I'm a citizen of the United States, and my name is Tom Jones."

"Then let me give you a word of advice. Take off the women's clothes you now have on and substitute the skirts befitting a man, otherwise you may get into untold trouble. And change the Thomas into Thomasina for the same reason."

"I can't do that. I'm not accustomed to anything but coats and trousers. Why, you don't wear skirts yourself."

"But I am a woman, and all women wear coats and trousers. Skirts would be very inconvenient for us who do the heavy work, who have to run, jump, ride horseback, lift heavy weights, and be out in all kinds of weather. The men, who stay mostly at home, and whose only aim in life is to look pretty and get married, can indulge in skirts and draperies."

"But you certainly are a man. I know it by your whiskers and deep bass voice."

"What voice would a woman have? Soprano? Oh, no. We are all basses and baritones and tenors. Our men sing soprano and alto. Why, my husband, who is a pure soprano, can sing high C above the staff with ease."

"And do women wear whiskers and moustaches?"

"Not all. Many shave their faces clean. But I am detaining you. The person you wish to see boards at the Outside Inn. I will let my son show you the way."

The creature we had talked with hailed another across the street.

"Here, Maria, show this party the Outside Inn."

"Excuse me," said I, "Mister — Miss —"

"Mrs. Henry Strong."

"Well, then, Mrs. Strong, you said you would send your son. This seems to be an old lady, or man, whichever way you may call him, and I feel as if it were asking too much."

"And so he is my son. You seem still confused in regard to sex. As for age, he is only ninety."

"Only ninety, and your son! How old are you yourself?"

"Nearly sixty."

"Then you mean that this is your mother, I mean your father, since he is ninety and you but sixty."

"I mean what I said. He is my son."

"But how can that be?"

"Are we not a hundred years old when we are born? Well, Maria was born ten years ago, and ten from a hundred leaves ninety, does it not? I was born forty years ago, and that makes me sixty. My mother and father are twenty and twenty-five, respectively. My grandmother lived to the very advanced age of a year and a half. Very few live that long."

"What is the greatest age your people attain?"

"Well, we have a song of longevity that begins, 'Oh, to be nothing.' Emma Carson did even better than that. He lived to be a minus quantity!"

"Indeed."

"He was minus two and a half months old when he died."

At this point the "boy" broke in on our conversation, being evidently in haste to get back.

"Oh, come on. I don't like to be out after daybreak. It is so dark when the sun shines it makes me afraid. If the stars should come out it would be still worse."

"Sun and stars don't shine at the same time?"

I looked up. The moon was sailing through a clear sky, but not a star twinkled. The boy gazed at me as if he doubted my sanity.

"Look over there," pointing to the sky, "and see."

There, to be sure, was the sun just showing over the edge of the horizon. A few stars gleamed faintly near it. As it rose higher the redness changed to a gloomy purple, and streaks of shade seemed to fall from it, wrapping the world in an atmosphere of darkness. Across the sky the moon was disappearing in a blaze of glory, throwing shafts of silver at the Prince of Darkness afar.

"A fine moonset in the east," remarked Maria.

"You mean the west," said I correctingly.

"Don't you know the moon and sun always rise in the west? Then they go round by the north and set in the east."

He started along at a brisk walk, and I hurried to keep at his side, for I wanted to learn more of the curious world I was in.

"What are those wooden umbrellas set along the street for?" said I to my guide.

"Those are street lights. Don't you know a street light when you see it?"

I looked again. There were no lamps beneath, but wherever the rays of the sun were intercepted and could not fall upon the ground a glow of light was reflected. Sides of houses sheltered from the sun were illumined in the same way. Even our own figures reproduced their shapes in bright streaks behind us. I looked at them in amazement.

"Passing events leave a brilliance behind," said Maria.

I would have lingered more, but my guide showed impatience. As we plodded onward we passed many heavy walls covered with square timbers. We had come by others which I had supposed to be houses, as they had windows through which light shone out. But these showed not so much as a rift in their sides.

"What are these places?" I asked.

The boy looked pityingly as he answered, "Houses, of course."

"What kind of houses?"

"Houses to live in; what else would they be? I don't like to have you guy me with such silly questions."

I disclaimed all intention of making fun and explained that things were so different where I lived that I felt a bit strange.

"Do you have earthquakes, that you build such heavy walls?"

"We have waterquakes. I never heard of an earthquake."

"Then why do you build houses but one story high?"

"These are cellars and basements you are looking at."

"Oh, I see. The owners probably spent so much on the foundations that they couldn't afford to finish them."

"Yes, they are completed," disputed the boy.

"But I don't see anything but the basements."

"How could you, when the rest goes down into the ground?"

"Are all cellars on top of buildings?"

"We certainly wouldn't put them anywhere else."

"Then why do you build them so heavy?"

"These are big blocks along here, seven stories deep."

Just then we heard the chimes striking the hour. They not only had a far-away sound, but seemed also to come from some place under our feet.

"What bells are those?"

"The chimes of St. Susan. They belong to this church here. Look down and you can see them."

We stepped to a railing surrounding the top of a square excavation walled with stone and piercing the ground a hundred and fifty feet. Near the bottom bells were suspended. As one turned on its side the tone that came up was deafening.

"Why do they dig these holes so deep?"

"It wouldn't be much of a steeple if it wasn't deep. Besides, the deeper you go the farther you can hear the sound."

A little farther on we came to a "basement" still unfinished.

"Ah," said I, "somebody is starting a new house."

"Finishing it. We build the cellar after the rest of the house is done. There is the Outside Inn next door. Now I must get home and abed, for it will soon be morning."

I thanked him for his kindness, and away he ran.

I was left in front of an unusually large cellar superstructure. Between it and the roadside a spacious area with broad stone steps led down to a wide and hospitable looking entrance. As I neared it a colored woman threw open the door and admitted me to a fine reception-room. Long and wide flights of stairs led from it to floors beneath. Down an open space in the centre I could see the stair landings. From the lowest story of all came a light that pervaded the entire building. In fact, it was only when the door opened that it grew darker, and the darkness came in from the outside. I learned afterward the light was brilliant day and night if windows and doors were kept closed, but these were often left open to tone down the glare.

I asked the colored woman, whom I found to be the porter, if Johanna Smith was in, and was conducted to his rooms in the lowest story. When he opened the door to my rap I thought I had encountered some strange woman. He had on the regulation skirts common to men in that country, and was bereft of the lux-

uriant moustache which had been his pride when we used to chum in old Connecticut. But I did not long remain in doubt of his real personality, for he grasped my hand, and said in a tone that spoke volumes, "Tom!"

"Jack!"

These two monosyllables were like the two taps of the snare drum introducing music by the full band, and ours began at once. At first he plied me with questions until he had received a summary of what had transpired in the United States since his departure. Then, finding I was nearly famished, he took me to the dining-room on the upper floor. There I had a bountiful repast, beginning with coffee and dessert and ending with a delicious soup. Many new dishes appealed to my clamorous appetite, and I enjoyed to the utmost the oysters stuffed with turkey, roast clam with veal dressing, and the delicate lamb fritters. Jack apologized for the meat dishes served in December, saying they were not usually on the menu in months having a "ber" in them, but as January was only two days off the chef had strained a point to cater to the taste of boarders fond of that food. We did not linger at table, as I was extremely tired and anxious to get to bed. A room was procured for me up under the basement. I might have had one next to Jack's at the bottom of the house, but he feared the strong light might make me wakeful, and so put me in a room with windows to let in the darkness from outside, but as it was then midwinter and extremely warm weather he advised me to leave the windows themselves closed. He showed me how to regulate the temperature by means of a register in the ceiling which admitted cold air from the ice-box above. Then I said good-night, retired, and was soon asleep.

When I awoke it was broad night-light, hens were crowing, cats barking, and everybody up and stirring. Dressing hastily, I made my way to the street for a mouthful of fresh air before the gong should sound for the first meal, which I had been told would be supper. Feeling a cool breeze from an open door of the basement I looked in. The cook's assistant was just lifting a huge block of ice into the cooking range. An appetizing odor pervaded the air, and I wondered from whence it came, as there was not pot or kettle on the top of the stove. But pretty soon the cook pulled a kettle

from beneath that was boiling merrily. Then I noticed numerous other utensils for frying, broiling or stewing, all under the range, the steam from which went down through a hole in the floor to parts unknown. In reply to a question I learned that ice was the only fuel used for stoves, furnaces or boilers. It was gathered in July and stacked where the sun could shine on it, in which way it could be kept for years.

Jack was early in search of me. With rosy cheeks (I really believe he painted) and the daintiest of gowns, I should have fallen in love with him if I had not known his sex. I gave him my arm and we entered the dining-room. The meal was much as before, though the bill of fare was more elaborate and an orchestra played. Again I was made acquainted with new dishes, dainty and toothsome. Particularly good were the fried watermelon, strawberry patties and butternut pies. I noticed it was proper form to eat with the knife, stir one's tea with a fork and drink from a saucer, so I did accordingly.

Some be-skirted gentlemen near us were so decked out with diamonds and jewelry that I asked Jack if they were not consorts of bankers or capitalists. He was much amused, for, he told me in a whisper, bankers and capitalists were the poorest classes in the community. They barely earned a living and had to work early and late to get a sufficiency. The gentleman dressed in satin with a tiara of diamonds was the husband of a day laborer who earned enormous wages. The gentleman dressed in pink silk, with a pearl necklace, was the son of a woman who had peddled matches on the street from a basket for many years until she was the wealthiest resident of the metropolis. But bankers were even poorer than presidents of railroads or insurance companies. And the bigger those companies the poorer were its officials.

After supper we went to Jack's room for a good long visit. Jack's history of his life is too voluminous to insert here, but a few items will help my own story. It seems when he left the United States he was so broken up by the refusal of a certain young lady that he vowed never to return. So although confounded by the unique state of affairs in Upside-down-ville, he concluded to conform to all its customs and requirements. To earn his living he applied for a place in a machine shop. But

machine work there being so much slower than handwork, one man being able to do ten or twelve times the amount accomplished by a machine, he could not make adequate wages. Therefore he was obliged to leave, having never learned the trade of handwork. On recommendation of a friend he accepted a place on a vegetable farm. To begin with he worked in a potato orchard, and after that crop was harvested helped dig the apples and pears. Then the squashes began to ripen on the bushes, and the nuts on the vines, and one thing following another he managed to get along a couple of months longer. Then he was again out of a job. After searching a long time until he had nearly become destitute another friend came to the rescue and got him the position of teacher in a school, where he still was.

"But, Jack," said I, "how can you fill such a place when your own education is so slight?"

"Schools are different here. Pupils learn to forget, not to memorize."

"To forget!" said I, in astonishment.

"Yes. You know children are learning all the time. It follows they must pick up many things not true and many things unwise for them to know. It is to eradicate these I am hired."

"How can you make a child forget what it already knows?"

"It is easy. First I make a confusion in his mind regarding the matter I wish to obliterate, then talk in a contrary way, and finally so fill his attention with other things that his original belief is erased from the tablet of memory. I have been very successful at this, as I am told by Miss Penstock, our school visitor and a dear old lady of sweet sixteen."

"Are there books which teach this science of forgetting?"

"Not one. Nor do we allow a child to have a book in school. In fact we would punish a child who should bring one."

"And so I suppose you will make this your life work?"

For the first time in his life Jack blushed.

"Now I shall have to tell a secret. I am soon to be married."

"And who is the happy woman?"

"Dr. Savum. She has been courting me some time and I have given her my hand. She is the physician assigned to this sanitary district. With only few cases of sickness for the last few years,

and not one for over eleven months, she has laid by a large amount of credit that will enable us to start housekeeping in good style. So you see I shall exchange school for the pleasanter occupation of domestic affairs."

"How can she earn much income with no sickness to speak of?"

"She is allowed a salary of five thousand a year as long as her precinct is free from disease. Should there be any sickness a certain amount is deducted for every patient. Dr. Squills in the next district had a bad reverse a year ago. An epidemic of grippe broke out there with so many cases it ate up her year's salary in a few weeks, and as two patients died on her hands she was fined five hundred dollars each, which left her badly in debt."

"At all events your beloved must have an easy time as long as conditions are good."

"On the contrary, she has to work very hard, visiting daily all under her charge, examining every person, looking into all sanitary arrangements and seeing they are kept in perfect order. Preventive medicines are left to be taken by persons in good health, but should they be taken ill all drugs are removed and nature given a chance to cure. It is the doctor's business to care for people while they are well."

That afternoon I had an adventure. Jack having an appointment with his dressmaker which prevented him from going out for a couple of hours, I concluded to take a stroll by myself, arranging to have him meet me when he should be at liberty. Sauntering up the street I looked down from the sidewalk into the shop windows below. The combinations of commodities sold in the stores were singular. One had eggs and hardware, another dry goods and butter. When I came to one displaying fruits, laces and ribbons and stood looking at the odd mixture I somehow was reminded of Maria. The thought occurred to me that it would be a graceful acknowledgment of his services to send him some inexpensive present. My first inclination was to buy him some of the purple oranges. Then I concluded to get something which would last for a keepsake. Seeing some bright yellow silk handkerchiefs with a gaudy pattern I thought one of those might please him.

"Have you lost some of your family?" said the clerk, as I

hesitated between one of that color and another of a dazzling blue.

"No. What made you think so?"

"I judged from your examination of these mourning goods."

"I would like something to please the taste of a young lady."

"We have a plain black that is considered quite gay and much affected by those inclined to be dudish."

Such a one I handed to the clerk to wrap up, and as he passed the bundle back he told me the price was fifty cents and I would find the cash box on the counter near the door. There was no cashier at the designated spot, but seeing a drawer on the showcase filled with money of all denominations I threw a silver half dollar into it and went out. Before I got far away I heard loud cries and saw two policewomen beckoning me to stop. Imagine my astonishment when told I was under arrest. I demanded the reason, but was told I would be informed when I reached the police station. When I arrived there I found the place anything but formidable. Not an iron bar at any window nor anything to distinguish it from an ordinary dwelling. Except for a few policewomen who sat near the door one would not have surmised it to be even a public building. The interior was furnished like some modern club house. In the parlor I was introduced to the chief, a lady of fine physique. To her my captors made the statement that I had not only taken a silk handkerchief from a store without settling for it, but had endeavored to defraud the owner of fifty cents more.

"There must be some mistake," said I, "for I certainly put a half dollar in the cash box."

"I shall have to hold you for trial," said the chief, "and until the time for court you may have the full privilege of the house. Write your name in the record book, please."

The chief read my signature, looked me over carefully with a twinkle in her eye, but made no comments.

"Must I be shut in a cell?"

"We have no cells."

"Am I the only offender? I see no other private citizens around."

"The five policewomen you saw outside are under arrest."

"Is the force corrupt?"

The chief smiled and shook her head.

"Then would you mind telling me why they are under arrest?"

"One of them allowed a man to vote at an election yesterday. Our laws give only women that right. Another was absent when a fight took place in her precinct, and the offenders escaped. Various nuisances have been committed in the territory assigned to the others, and as the guilty parties were not apprehended the policewomen of those districts are held personally responsible. They will probably be sentenced to serve out the time which would have been given the real offenders, and also have to pay the fines, unless the rogues are found before the time of commitment expires."

I asked the privilege of sending for Jack, which was accorded. I also suggested it might be well to have a lawyer.

"No lawyers are allowed in any court, unless they themselves are under indictment."

"Then why do they exist? What work do they perform?"

"It is their business to draw up and simplify laws to be enacted by our legislature. If there is ever any controversy as to the plain intent of the government the lawyer who wrote the law has to pay heavy indemnities. They sometimes make wills, but these must also be worded so there can be no occasion for dispute. It would be disastrous for a lawyer to have one of his wills disputed in regard to any of its provisions, for if a judgment should be secured against it the lawyer would have it to pay. But we have not had a will case in this country for many years."

Jack arrived just before the Judge made her appearance. We adjourned to a cosy reception-room and my case was called at once at Jack's request. The chief stated the misdemeanor of which I was accused, and I was asked what I had to say about it. I told the story as I have already given it to the reader. Jack then asked permission to say a few words to the court and myself. First he told the Judge that I was a foreigner from the United States, and unused to the ways and customs of the place. Then, turning to me, he informed me that all money was there considered as evidence of debt. Whatever money a person had in his possession showed that the holder owed work or goods to that

amount. I had purchased a silk handkerchief worth fifty cents, and, therefore, ought to have taken a half dollar from the money box and thereby have relieved the storekeeper of that much of his liabilities. Instead of doing so I had added to them.

The chief said I was guilty of another misdemeanor. I was evidently a man and yet was masquerading in women's clothes. This Jack also explained to the court and begged leniency, inasmuch as I was used to wearing that apparel in my own country. The Judge said it was needless to proceed further, and as he was satisfied that I had not meant to break any laws he would withhold judgment if I would promise to go back to the store and make the proper corrections, and would also agree to wear skirts in the future. I informed the Judge that I should be glad to right any mistakes I had made at the store, but as to wearing skirts I would rather leave the country. I was asked if I would go at once if released and on giving my promise was told to consider myself free.

Jack was fairly used up at the sudden termination of my visit. He urged me to try his clothes for a day or two, but I could not. Sorrowfully we walked to the office of the ox-team express. Then, after saying good bye, I purchased my ticket, taking five dollars of money from the ticket seller which I brought home with me and can show at any time.

Sometime, if I can make up my mind to don the clothes they wear there, I may go again, and then will tell you more of Upside-down-ville.



The Great White Serpent of the Malorki.*

BY ALEXANDER RICKETTS.



HE wedding ceremony was over, and Harding had congratulated the bride and groom in the calm, conventional manner. As he turned to go, he stood for a long moment in the doorway, gazing back on them with an inscrutable look. Then he went out into the night. All that night he tramped the streets with restless energy, but the morning found him leaning upon the rail of a liner, staring blankly at the shores of the bay as they glided by, and if any one had been rash enough to tell him that when he next saw them a wife would be standing at his side, he would have revelled in throwing his informant overboard. And that was the last his friends saw of him for years.

Forgetting is a hard job for a man like Harding, but even he found, as time went by, that the memory of the girl he loved did not sting him so often or sharply, and the restless desire for change—any change, so long as it was a change—which had driven him hither and thither all over Europe and most of Asia, and plunged him recklessly into any adventure which suggested itself, did not lash him on so relentlessly. Instead, there came a time when any action became an effort, a time when all he sought was quiescence of mind and body. He was not gloomy or misanthropic. He had never been either; but the fierce fires of his longing for her who had given herself to another were at last under his control, and he felt the reaction from the turmoil as a strong man does after strenuous conflict.

In this mood he turned his steps to North Africa. On a prior visit fate had put it in his way to do a favor to the sheik of one of the desert tribes, and he now recalled the frank invitation to be

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* The writer of this story received a cash prize of \$100 in THE BLACK CAT story contest ending February 26, 1902.

his guest for as long as he would. With considerable difficulty Harding located the sheik, and at considerable danger joined him. The tribesmen do not forget, and his welcome was undoubted. The life contented him. The dignified courtesy of the men, never intruding but always cordially ready to companion him, the slow, infrequent speech, the long, thoughtful silences, all soothed his distracted spirit, and in aimless roving, either with the sheik's tribe or with others akin to it, he passed many years in the Desert.

The weird tales of the story-tellers, told in the flickering light of the camp-fire while the steady stars shone above them with the strong, full light of the desert nights, and all around stretched the vast reaches of barren sand, fascinated him. Particularly one — it was hardly a story, simply a collection of rumors and guesses woven into a narrative — about the Great White Serpent of the Malorli interested him. It was to the effect that somewhere in the forest on the further side of the Great Desert dwelt a tribe of serpent worshippers. The object of their adoration was a monstrous snake, pure white, and of prehistoric size. This god was fed upon human sacrifices, but refused all not white like itself. The worshippers being negroes of quite phenomenal blackness were therefore compelled to kidnap the sacrifices where they might. Diligent inquiry convinced Harding that the tale had this much foundation: There was not a tribe among the desert rovers that had not for many, many years mysteriously lost a member. Sometimes it was a man, sometimes, a woman, but the lost was always youthful and always gone without a trace except that the following morning in the midst of the camp would be found a rudely carved ivory snake. Pursuit was invariably futile.

Again Harding's mood changed. He began to long for something different. What it should be he didn't care. Civilization did not attract him, but the aimless life he was living no longer satisfied him. Then it was that this fascinating story fastened upon his imagination, and he resolved to investigate it.

Upon making his determination known, the old sheik tried to dissuade him. Then he offered to accompany Harding, himself and his young men. This Harding refused, saying, with a smile, "No, no, Sheik Ilderim; one man can go in a quest like this where two cannot. I go alone, and if I stay, there are few to mourn me."

"Then may Allah be with you, my son," replied Sheik Ilderim, stroking his beard sadly, but too courteous to offer further opposition to his guest. "If go you will, we will take you to the farthest oasis; there you shall take the two fleetest camels, for perchance if you fail to reach the forest on the first you can return on the second, and there, if you return not for ten years, you will always find some of us awaiting to welcome or succor you, and may Allah guide your camel. Allah is Allah!"

A month later amid the lamentations of the tribe Harding set out from the oasis. He travelled light, for he knew that speed was of the utmost importance. He carried a rifle, revolver and knife, but he knew that if strategy would not gain the goal he sought force could not. His precious store of parched grain and dried dates, with a water-skin, were loaded on the led-camel, the other — they were both the pick of the herd — bore himself. He travelled by night, shielding himself as best he could from the insupportable rays of the sun in the daytime, and urging his camels to their best speed. Still, when at length the one he rode sank down dying, he could see nothing in all the world but the waste of desolate sand measuring away in all directions illimitably.

But he had no thought of turning back. Lightening himself of the rifle, he mounted the spare camel, with no weapons but his revolver, a handful of extra cartridges and his knife, and pushed on. Another night's travel, and another, and in the middle of the third his second camel fell beneath him with a gasp almost human.

Slowly Harding scanned the horizon. Nothing but barren sand met his questioning gaze. Throwing away his revolver and cartridges, hesitating a moment over his knife, but deciding to retain that, he stuffed a handful of dates into his pocket, drained the last drops of water and pushed out on foot into the desert. On and on he plodded, his mind set only on never giving up until he had reached the farthest point possible to human endurance.

The sun came up and found him doggedly stumbling on. Suddenly he stopped, shaded his eyes with his hands for a minute, and gave a hoarse cry of wonder. There, bearing directly down upon him was a group of perhaps a dozen camels, but they were of a size and strength and speed such as he had never seen, and leading them rode three repulsive negroes, black as glistening coal.

The next moment he was surrounded, and with lightning-like swiftness bound and laid in a covered litter slung between two of the camels. Then the whole party, turning directly back, bore him swiftly away, retracing its tracks; but in all of it, to his utter amazement, he was handled with the gentlest care.

A long day's journey brought them to the edge of a vast forest. There he was transferred to another party of negroes more repulsive, if that were possible, than his captors, and at once a march was begun into the forest. Up to this time not a word had been spoken, but now he was surprised to find his guards quite ready to talk with him. Their speech was a sort of mongrel Arabic which he had little difficulty in comprehending, and they eagerly assured him that no harm was intended him, but upon the object of his capture they maintained a stolid silence. And all their actions bore out their assurances. Indeed, he was not only treated kindly, but with a deference and consideration which caused him the most gruesome anticipations.

For five days they marched steadily, deeper and deeper into the forest. On the sixth they reached a little village on the edge of a small lake, and the whole populace gave itself up immediately to feasting and rejoicing over their arrival. As the villagers thronged around him, Harding became quite uncomfortable over his prominence in the holiday, especially when the maidens openly admired his complexion and figure, and more so as the haunting suspicion never left him that it was due entirely to his being destined as the next sacrifice to the Great White Serpent, if that storied reptile really existed. With a steadily sinking heart he reflected that he could only await developments, escape being clearly impossible, although he was allowed to go unbound.

A day and a night they rested in the village. The next, after elaborate and evidently ceremonial bathing in the lake, the party donned white robes, putting one also on Harding, and set forth along a well-used road leading from the village. An hour's walk brought them to a mighty river. Both its banks for a long distance up and down were crowded with waiting negroes, maintaining a solemn silence, but what instantly riveted Harding's attention was a small island directly in the centre of the stream. It was covered, until in many places the water lapped the walls, with

a circular stone structure some fifty feet high, and pierced here and there by gateways with pointed arches.

The arrival of the party was greeted with loud acclaim by the multitudes thronging the banks of the river, and as they marched through to a barge awaiting them, the cries of joy and welcome sounded like a death knell in Harding's ears, for he grimly suspected that he himself had little occasion to feel joyous.

They were met at the largest gateway of the stone structure by a number of men robed in white also, and conducted into a lofty and spacious hall. Harding's eyes rapidly swept the room in hopes some way of escape might appear, but as they scanned the lower end of it he felt his knees tremble beneath him, and the hand of fear upon his throat. The next second, however, he recovered himself, and, outwardly calm, gazed upon the most horrible sight he had ever had to face.

It was no mere story-teller's myth. There, coiled fold upon fold, was an enormous snake. It was a glistening, phosphorescent white, except where its heavy-lidded eyes shone like lifeless rubies, and it seemed to Harding that all the hall was filled with a dull and sickly radiance shimmering from its coils. He could not guess what its length might be, but at the thickest its body was certainly as big around as a barrel.

Around and around in a great circle in front of it swung the priests, their white robes swinging and swaying with their motions, chanting as they danced a dirge-like melody that sent the chills creeping up and down Harding's spine and stiffened the hairs upon the back of his neck. Faster and faster they circled, now contracting their ring, now expanding it, weaving and whirling, swaying and swinging, until Harding grew dizzy watching them. Then, with a thunderous triumphant shout, they stopped, forming the two sides of a lane straight from Harding to the serpent.

And then he rubbed his eyes in sheer bewilderment, forgetting his awful peril. For, from amongst the folds of the coiled serpent, lightly sprang a maiden so radiant in her pure loveliness that his heart stood still as she slowly and bashfully advanced up the lane between the silent priests, and stood blushing before him, but with her glorious eyes fixed confidently upon his, and her hands outstretched trustingly for his in a mute appeal. She was irresistible.

Harding gathered her hands firmly in his, and hardly knowing what he was doing, drew her closer and closer to him until his lips reverently touched her forehead.

At this the priests burst into joyous acclaim, and from their midst came the oldest, who laid his hands upon their heads, saying, "Man and wife ye now are."

Then, turning to the assembled priests, he cried, "Behold, O Slaves of the Serpent, behold ye the Children of the Serpent! Let all worship and care for them as ye would the seed of the Great White Serpent shall not die."

They were then taken to the roof of the building and shown to the crowds outside with the same words, and from that multitude instantly rose shout after shout of joy and thanksgiving. From there they were conducted to another part of the building, separated from the Hall of the Serpent by heavy wooden doors, and left alone.

Harding looked long upon the wife he had so unexpectedly married, and drew a long breath.

"We-ell," he said. "Well, this being food for a snake isn't so awful after all. Come here, little one."

With a glad little cry, the girl, who had been standing before him demurely waiting his pleasure, sprang to his side and clasped her hands upon his arm.

"You are content?" she asked, anxiously exploring his eyes.

"Content?" laughed Harding, putting his arms fondly around her. "More than that. I never expected to be so happy in my life. But what does it all mean? I thought I was to be fed to his Royal Snakeship as a particularly dainty tidbit."

Then Haidee, his wife, told him of the cult of the Serpent. The Great White Serpent was old, so old that no one knew when its worship had begun. Within the memory of the oldest priest, and of his father, and of his father before him, it had always lived in the temple; it on one side, and those known as its Children on the other, cared for and waited on by its Slaves, the negroes. Six times in the year was it fed with a pure white bullock without spot or blemish. Then for days it lay torpid and motionless, and none dared intrude upon it. At other times it came and went up or down the river, a stream from which swept across the end of the

Hall of the Serpent through doors made for that purpose, as it chose, but always it returned for the feeding. But, at intervals, it was fed upon human sacrifices. Harding shuddered, and drew Haidee closer to him, questioning her eagerly.

Yes, the Children of the Serpent were the sacrifices. If it were not so, the Slaves of the Serpent would perish miserably from the earth. When a child came to the Children of the Serpent it was taken from them, and carefully reared by a woman selected from all those who were Slaves of the Serpent. Then, when it was seen that it would live, was the time of the sacrifice, and both parents, instead of the bullock, were sacrificed to the Serpent. And when the child had grown to a marriageable age, the Desert Men were sent out on their strong and swift camels to find a mate for it, for they must both be white, nor did they ever fail to bring one, even as he himself had been brought. So the line of the Children of the Serpent never died, nor did the Great White Serpent ever lack its human sacrifices.

But if there was no child? No, Haidee did not know what then. It had never happened. Probably the Children of the Serpent would be sacrificed just the same, and the Desert Men would be sent out for both a man and a woman. She did not know, and why seek trouble? There was always a child.

During the days that followed, in all his happiness in Haidee, Harding's mind was ever busy planning their escape. He would not accept the dreadful fate which overhung them, with Haidee's fatalism, as inevitable, and it was a continual spur to his ingenuity, but without success. He learned that the priests who had crowded the Hall of the Serpent on the day of his arrival were also the chiefs of the villages scattered throughout the forest, and from their number he could easily see that for him and Haidee to traverse it without being discovered was an impossibility. Escape by land was out of the question.

But there was the river at their very door. If only they could float down that undiscovered it must take them to the sea, and whatever their fate then it must be less horrible than the one awaiting them. He had plenty of time and materials to construct a raft, for no one ever ventured to come to the temple unless they signalled for them to bring food, except upon the days of worship.

But the fishermen on the river, and the women and children always on its banks made such a scheme impossible in the daytime, and a quiet investigation showed Harding that, no matter how free they seemed to be, a close guard was kept upon every exit from the temple at night. Almost he lost hope.

One of his pleasures during all this time was in weaning his wife away from her superstitious worship of the Serpent. Brought up to reverence it as a god, as she of course had been, it was long before his patient teaching of higher and better things prevailed, nor could she ever look upon it with the utter abhorrence which filled his soul at the bare thought of it. Still, she did come, helped doubtless by her great love for him, to think of it as a mere reptile. Nor did she shudder any longer at the sacrilege when Harding, in his moments of despair, declared that before they should become its victims he would kill it, and endure whatever punishment the infuriated savages might inflict.

Twice had Harding been forced to witness the sacrifice of the white bullock to the Great White Serpent. Each time the sight of the slimy folds slowly crushing the living, screaming animal into a shapeless mass of broken bones and quivering flesh, the careful moistening of it with fetid saliva, and the deliberate deglutition of it had filled him with such sickening disgust and loathing that he could hardly stagger, faint and nauseated, from the horrid scene.

After the third time he covered his quivering face with shaking hands, and sank down weak and nerveless upon a skin at his wife's side. Quickly she caught his head to her bosom, and sought to soothe him by every endearment known to a loving woman.

"Oh, Haidee, Haidee," he cried, shivering with loathing even in her arms, "it—it actually screamed while being swallowed. It did. It did. It was alive yet. I heard it. Oh, my God!"

Little by little he regained command over his unstrung nerves, and ashamed of his outbreak, began fiercely planning the death of the great snake.

"I'll slash its head off to-morrow with that heavy knife I cut the rushes for your basket-making with," he declared, pacing excitedly back and forth. "I'll kill the beastly worm, and skin it, and make—" he stopped suddenly, and stood motionless for a few

moments lost in thought. Then he continued, more excitedly, "Why didn't I think of this before? It'll work. I know it'll work. That infernal snake can go wherever it pleases. And its hide is waterproof, of course. Haidee, my dearest, how long will it take you to weave two great baskets — so big?"

He held his hands wide apart.

"What is it, beloved? Tell me all," asked Haidee, alarmed by the wild excitement in his face.

With rapid words Harding explained the plan that had flashed upon him, developing it as he spoke. He would kill the snake, and carefully skin it. Then he would place the basket-work inside the skin, and draw that up around it. It would make a canoe which he was sure would hold them, and the girth of the snake was so large that they could draw the skin clear over the top of the basket-work, and lie inside until they were safe from observation. The head he could hold above water by running a pole up the neck, and a couple of poles spliced together would hold the tail out behind. The basket-work would give enough roundness to the body to deceive anybody, especially in the water, and as the snake swam up or down the river at pleasure no one would think anything strange at seeing it or would dare investigate too closely. It would certainly be a couple of days before they would be missed, perhaps longer, and by that time he hoped to be beyond pursuit. In any event, no more horrible fate could be theirs than the one to which they were doomed.

Haidee caught his enthusiasm, and at once set to work. They really, upon sober second thought, had plenty of time, for the snake never was seen for at least two weeks after it had gorged a bullock, during which time it lay torpid in its hall digesting its meal, and until the end of that time it would excite suspicion at once if it were seen in the river.

The day at last dawned, however, when the Great White Serpent would again be stirring. Haidee's basket-work, made as nearly waterproof as possible, was ready, and the knife had been sharpened to a razor-edge upon a smooth stone Harding had found on the bank of the river. Grasping it firmly, he gave his wife a long embrace, and swinging open the door, stepped resolutely within the Hall of the Serpent.

There it lay, stretched at its enormous length, inert and motionless still from its gorge, the Great White Serpent of the Malorli. Softly but swiftly Harding dashed towards its head. As he approached, it opened its eyes lazily and fixed them full upon him with a sinister stare. There was something so evil, so malignant, so cruel and devilish in their pallid depths that for an instant they halted him as an icy hand seemed to clutch his heart. The next, he had taken the last stride, and surely and mightily struck the blow. The keen, heavy knife bit clear through the backbone, right at the base of the skull. There was a mighty heave of the huge body, and Harding leaped across it just in time to avoid being enveloped in the fatal embrace of its horrid folds. Writhing and twisting, coiling and uncoiling, now lashing out with tremendous force, next contracting into fearful knots, the enormous reptile thrashed wildly about the hall. A dozen times Harding missed an awful death by the least fraction of an inch before he gained the door his wife bravely held open for him. Breathless and panting they watched the earth-shaking death throes of the monster.

At last, with a mighty quiver from head to tail, it lay still in death. With a shout of triumph Harding sprang to its side, and slipped the point of his knife under the thick skin where his blow had laid it open. Rip, rip, rip, and he had it slit clear to the tail, still faintly moving. He worked with feverish energy, Haidee valiantly helping, for now they had little time to spare, and he found that before their strength was equal to drawing the skin from under he had to cut the body into lengths. They hardly took time to breathe. The sweat streamed from them. A dozen times their strength seemed exhausted. But, as night fell, the basket-work was in place, the thick skin drawn up around it and sewn up, except for a slit big enough to admit them, and made as waterproof at the seam as possible with melted beeswax, the pole holding the head above water propped securely in place, the other spliced one extended the tail, and, as he held this oddest of vessels buoyantly floating upon the stream running across the end of the Hall, and noted its naturalness, Harding at last felt with an exultant thrill that escape was a possibility.

Haidee was already inside with a small store of provisions. Harding stepped lightly in and stretched himself upon the bot-

tom, after one keen look around to see that all was right so far. He drew the skin together above them, and the current swept them out upon the broad bosom of the river. For good or ill their strange voyage had begun.

And it went better than even Harding in his most sanguine moments had dared hope. For three nights and two days they drifted with the current, without accident or molestation, and shortly after dawn of the third day he was suddenly awakened from the light doze he had permitted himself by the sound of rifle shots and the noise of bullets zipping into the water at his side. With his heart in his mouth he peered cautiously out. There, hardly a hundred yards away, came steaming up a little launch with a man, a white man, standing in the bow, blazing hopefully away at what he mistook for a snake.

With a joyous shout Harding sprang to his feet. "Hold on! Hold on there!" he shouted, waving his arms with reckless disregard of an upset. "Do you want to start international complications by shooting us?"

"Ah, beg pardon I'm sure," replied the sportsman, dropping his rifle in surprise. "I didn't know it was your private yacht, you know. But what the devil — oh, beg pardon, a lady, too."

Explanations were soon made. The stranger was an English sportsman exploring the river in his launch, but at once he turned back and carried them to the nearest port where steamships touched. The snake's skin probably adorns his home at this minute, as Harding, with great generosity, never wanting to set eyes on it again, presented him with it.

A few weeks later Harding and Haidee stood upon the deck of a vessel watching the shores of Africa fade into the distance.

"And now to get word of my safety to good old Sheik Ilderim," he murmured, looking fondly into her eyes, "and then home, my dearest."

And Haidee answered, the love-light shining back at him happily, "Where your home is, O beloved, there is mine."



The Bride.*

BY ANNA MCCLURE SHOLL.



CARLTON had not seen Robert Arnold since their college days, but they had kept up a desultory correspondence, less the result of present sympathy than a tribute to the memory of the youthful enthusiasms they had shared. From Arnold's letters Carlton judged that these enthusiasms had either departed altogether or were in abeyance since he had become part of the fashionable world to which his inherited wealth and gentle birth gave him access. This merging of the poet in the modern man of society seemed to Carlton scarcely a matter of regret, since Arnold in his college days had been over-sensitive, high-strung, and inclined to walk by the light of his dreams. Having adapted himself to this new conception of his old friend, formed partly from his letters and partly from a clever book he had written, Carlton was wholly unprepared for the strange appeal which broke the silence of a year. The letter, the handwriting of which betrayed mental agitation, began abruptly:

"I should like to see you, Carlton, if you can possibly spare me a week out of your busy life. I say a week, since no less time would suffice for the need I have of you at this crisis to explain itself. I have always thought myself a well-balanced man, not given to fancies, but something so astounding has come into my life that I am forced to conclude its reality in the face of reason and judgment. I cannot write you in detail about it. On paper it would seem madness. Wire me that you will come at once. You do not know how much I need you!"

The day after Carlton received this letter he was on his way to Arnold's home, which he had not visited since they were sophomores. It was in a lonely part of the country, six miles from the

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station of a branch road. Arnold met his guest in the fading dusk, his face, through all its pallor, alight with welcome. The years had added a becoming firmness, verging on severity, to the well-modelled mouth and chin, but the deep blue eyes held their old dreamy look, not unmingled now with some vague suggestion of terror or apprehension.

As they drove through the twilight they talked of college days, of old associations, of things said and done long ago. But Carlton discerned a certain restlessness in Arnold's manner, particularly after they had entered the two-mile driveway which led through the grounds of the estate to the house. He glanced from side to side as if he expected to see some one or something emerge from the park-like shrubbery.

"You are all alone, Arnold?"

"Yes, but I've always been more or less alone. My mother died, you may know, when I was a little chap — my father a year and a half ago. Then I came back to the estate. I never fancied living here in my father's time. He was austere, and there was little sympathy between us. Besides, he liked his solitude — shut up with his books."

"And you have few neighbors?"

"The Whartons to the west, the McDonalds to the east. I am engaged to Miss Isabel Wharton. We — we are to be married — in a fortnight."

He said the words with so much hesitation and restraint that his friend was immediately puzzled. Surely, this engagement could have no connection with his strange letter? Yet — why should a man on the verge of a presumably happy marriage write such a letter? Could there be business difficulties? No, a man would not write mystically of these. Arnold's letter had suggested an overwrought condition, due to grappling with something intangible.

"Then congratulations are in order," Carlton said, with something of Arnold's own hesitation reflected in his voice.

"Save them, Carlton, until I am safely married."

"You see obstacles?"

"A great obstacle — yes. That is why — I sent for you." He paused; then placed his hand impulsively on his old chum's arm.

"Could you — would you, stay here till after the wedding?"

"My dear fellow, yes, if it will be of any service to you!"

"Ah, you are still the old Carlton! I'll tell you all after dinner over our cigars."

They dined in state in the fine old-fashioned room, sacred to polished mahogany and ancient silver urns. Across the branched candlesticks and the mass of hot-house roses in the centre of the table, Arnold faced his guest with a look of almost pitiful gladness and temporary content. They talked again of their college days, but the conversation was lacking in logical issues. They were both preoccupied.

"Is it light enough for you?" Arnold said once. "I have a kind of passion for candles, but the electric light could be turned on if you wish."

"I should like for a moment to see clearly that portrait which hangs on the wall just back of your chair. Through the dimness it bears a remarkable likeness to you."

As Carlton said the words, Arnold turned pale, and a look of trouble deepened in his face, but he motioned to the butler, who pressed a button. The portrait flashed from the wall with the vigor and reality of life. It was of a man of about thirty, clad in the fashion of half a century ago. He had the same gallant bearing, and his mouth and chin were very like Arnold's. The eyes were of the same deep blue, but they had an expression which Carlton had never seen in Robert's — a coldness and cruelty that put the spectator at once out of sympathy with the portrait.

"Surely, an ancestor?" was the comment of the guest. He saw the wine-glass tremble in Arnold's hand.

"My grandfather, Robert Arnold. He died before I was born."

"The resemblance between you and the portrait is very striking. It might almost *be* you — except for the eyes."

Arnold's wine-glass went over with a crash. The butler hurried to his side. In the slight confusion which followed, the subject was dropped.

When they went to the library after dinner, a wood fire was burning on the hearth, and the heavy red curtains were drawn before the windows, although it was scarcely past the middle of October. Carlton then remembered that in the long drawing-

room across the great square hall the curtains were also unlooped and hanging straight.

Arnold did not seem inclined to talk. He smoked in silence, but his visitor discerned in him the same restless apprehension he had exhibited on the drive from the station, and did not attempt commonplaces, his interest in the coming revelation being too keen.

The silence of the house was almost oppressive. Not even the ticking of a clock broke it. Carlton was all the more startled, then, when suddenly against the window-pane behind the curtains of the nearest window there came a sharp tapping, as if some one knocked with bony knuckles on the glass. So imperative was the summons that he instinctively rose to his feet and reached for the curtain, but in the same instant Arnold caught his arm. Carlton turned. Arnold's face was ashen.

"For God's sake, don't look! don't look!" he whispered hoarsely.

"But there is some one there!"

"That is just it — there's some one there!"

Carlton felt himself grow cold. This, then, was why all the curtains were unlooped. Then common-sense asserted itself.

"What does this mean, Arnold?" he said almost sharply. "If there's some one there, we ought to —" He paused, puzzled. Again the rapping came, sharp and clear.

"Thank God, you hear it too," exclaimed the host.

"Of course I hear it."

Carlton stepped to the curtain, but he was again held back by a cry from Arnold, who was sitting in his arm-chair, grasping the arms rigidly.

"Carlton! lock the door!" he said in a strained, intense voice. "Lock the door and keep me in here."

"And keep you in here!"

"She'll conquer. Her will is stronger than mine."

Carlton's brain whirled.

"For God's sake, Arnold, of whom are you talking?"

He looked up piteously.

"Of the woman who knocks."

"Who is she? Where does she live? What is she doing here?"

"She doesn't live. She is dead."

"Are you mad?"

"No, but I soon shall be if this keeps on. Come close to the fire. I am cold. No, wait."

He rose and rang a bell.

A young man-servant answered.

"James, there have been sounds on the porch as if some one were prowling about the place. Will you go out and search the grounds near the house?"

The man bowed, but cast a puzzled look upon his master.

When they were alone again, Carlton said eagerly:

"Arnold, tell me what this means!"

He drew a long breath, looked from side to side, listened, then began:

"It was last December that I first saw her, when I began regularly to live here. Up to that time I had found the place too lonely, and I had spent my winters in town. Then I met Isabel Wharton, young, beautiful, good," he spoke the words softly as one speaks of the dead. "From that time this place seemed paradise, because she lived here. Our intimacy grew. By the middle of March — last March — our engagement was announced. Carlton, all my dreams came back to me.

"But before the engagement I had seen this — this — woman twice. Twice in the grounds among the trees, a white figure with a long braid of black hair. I wondered what woman was straying through my grounds, and why she was in white in the dead of winter. But she was too far off for me to see her features distinctly. I concluded she must be one of the maids from the house.

"The third time I saw her was the day after my engagement to Miss Wharton. I was coming through the grounds by a by-path. It was a bitter March day, and the snow had an ice-crust. I slipped and slid along over the frozen ground, thinking of Isabel, when she stood before me — this creature — in the middle of the path. I stood quite still myself with a queer horror suddenly icing my veins, for her dark eyes were full of such utter misery and such a baleful appeal. It was all over in a few seconds, but I had time to see a long scar across her deathly white face on the left cheek, and that her eyebrows met. She was in white, and her hair was in a braid over her shoulder.

"I remember stammering out something — asking her if she

were lost or ill — then suddenly found myself talking to the air. I looked about. I was alone in the woods. An awful oppression seized me which I wouldn't let deepen into terror; but I felt as I did when a little boy, left alone in the dark, with my father away off in the great library and all the servants gone. I hurried on to the house, trying to believe I had imagined it; but I knew I had not. That night I was sitting alone in the library, making out an itinerary for our wedding-trip. Some one knocked sharply on the window-pane. I drew the curtain. The woman I had seen in the woods was staring at me through the window with that same awful look. I rushed out of doors and around to the porch. There was no one there. The moon was full and it was very light, but not a trace of the creature could I see. In the hall I met the old house-keeper, a woman who was lady's maid in the household when my grandfather was young. When she saw my face she asked me if I were ill. I called her into the library.

"'Hannah,' I said, 'there's a strange woman lingering about the grounds and the house, and I want the servants to find her.' Then I told her what had happened, and I described the woman.

"'She grew as white as the snow outside.

"'Heaven have mercy, Master Robert!' she cried.

"'You know the woman?' I asked.

"'You say she has a long scar running from ear to chin across the left cheek?' was Hannah's reply.

"'Yes; do you know her?'

"'And meeting eyebrows, very black?'

"'Yes.'

"'And all in white.'

"'Yes, yes,' I said, impatiently. 'Do you know her?'

"'She began to tremble.

"'Do you know this woman? Speak out, Hannah!'

"'God spare us. It's Jane Adams!'

"'Jane Adams?'

"'The woman who was in love with your grandfather. The woman who thought she was married to him. You never knew the story, Master Robert.'

"'But this woman is young.'

"'So was Jane Adams when she died.'

"Then she broke down, and between her frightened sobs she told me the story. She herself was born in the same village with this unfortunate woman, who would have been beautiful had it not been for this scar on the left cheek, the result of an accident in childhood. Despite the disfigurement she was much sought after, for she was of a magnetic and emotional temperament. Not that Hannah described her in these words, but I recognized the type in her homely phrases — and — I myself had seen her. When she was about twenty she attracted the notice of my grandfather, who was then twenty-five years old. He had no intention of marrying her, but she was a good girl, so he went through a mock ceremony with her which she believed was legal ; later he deserted her and her child to make a real marriage with an Englishwoman of position.

"The poor girl's people would not believe her story of the marriage, and they turned her out, but there were many who did believe it. After the death of her child she went mad from grief and shame and would wander about this place clothed in white, for she thought she was a bride, and would knock on the windows and peer in looking for my grandfather, but he never came back in her life-time. She died young ; and Hannah tells me she is buried not far from here."

Carlton looked at his host in utter astonishment. That he might have been the victim of an hallucination he could believe, but that this hallucination should exactly answer the description of a woman dead before Arnold was born was more than Carlton could accept. Some one, he thought, was lying, or was self-deceived. Yet it was plainly evident that Arnold believed in his story ; that he was haunted by a horror of some kind.

"Arnold," he said, "supposing this to be true, and not the result of an over-wrought state, what did you mean by saying, 'She will conquer !' "

"I mean that I feel the grip of a will stronger than mine — a will which I am resisting with all the force of my nature."

"Still supposing it, wild as it seems, to be true ; at least true to you. Why should she want you — you, and not some one else ?"

"Can't you see ? It is horribly obvious to me, since I learned her story. You, yourself, said at dinner that the likeness between

me and the portrait of my grandfather when a young man is almost perfect. People who remember my grandfather say I am his very image. Carlton" — his voice sank to a hoarse whisper — "she thinks I am he!"

Carlton arose and paced the room. "Had they both gone mad together?" he thought.

"Does Miss Wharton know?" he finally asked.

"Yes; and old Hannah is faithful. Isabel hopes that after the marriage all will be well. We shall travel for a year."

"Arnold, could it be imagination?"

"How could I conjure up a woman I'd never heard of — a woman who has been in her grave these fifty years?"

"Has — does the apparition appear often?"

"I won't look."

"You mean —?"

"I mean that I am conscious of some one being near me."

"Have you ever seen her — inside the house?"

"Thank God, no! That would be fatal! You'll not leave me, Carlton, will you, until after the day," he added in a beseeching tone, as if he could not believe his friend's word.

The days went by swiftly, and in their prosaic light the experience of Arnold seemed to Carlton a strange delusion and nothing more. The knocking he did not attempt to explain. He met Isabel Wharton, and found her all that Arnold had said — a woman to bring back to one the dreams and hopes of one's youth. But her brightness was dimmed by an ever-haunting fear. The visitor saw it in her eyes.

"Stay close to him," she said to Carlton one day. "He has told you I have — a rival."

Carlton watched over Arnold as one watches over a sick man. He had shaken off all belief in his friend's fancy, except the belief that it was real to him, when something occurred which sent him, too, for an hour into the place of torment where Arnold dwelt. On the afternoon before the wedding Carlton was sitting alone in the library, reading Erdmann's "History of Philosophy," when he experienced a curious sensation of being watched. He looked up. There, outside the window, almost at his elbow, she stood, the woman of Arnold's horror. If death should masquerade as grief

and desperate longing, it would wear her shape. He saw the scar, the meeting brows. Then he struggled to his feet as one oppressed with awful nightmare, and through that nightmare he experienced the dread consciousness that the turning of the woman's head from side to side meant that she was looking for some one else.

Carlton said nothing to Arnold, but to himself he said, "Am I too stricken with the same disease?" The bridegroom, for his part, was boyishly, radiantly happy. He seemed on this, the eve of his wedding day, to have passed already into the sunshine of its release. Carlton breathed at last, freely. No apparition of terror, he thought, could cross the boundary of that happy consciousness.

The friends retired early, and Carlton fell into an uneasy sleep, due less to anxiety for Arnold than to the memory of what he had seen that afternoon. Was it real, or was it a mental projection, the outcome of intense sympathy with his poor friend in his delusion? Carlton was feverish with perplexity. Long after midnight he awoke and tossed about for the space of an hour, then fell into a deep slumber. He was awakened in the broad daylight by a rapping at the door, and when he answered it was opened, and a little old woman, very feeble with extreme age, stood on the threshold. He recognized Hannah, the housekeeper. There was a look of fear and apprehension on her face.

"Is there anything wrong?" he said at once.

"I hope not, sir," she quavered. "But Master Robert's bed has not been slept in, and the night-light was burning yet, when his man went to call him at eight. I've sent the gardeners over the grounds, but they can't find him. If you would help us, sir!"

When Carlton had dressed he went first to Robert's room. They had left the shutters closed, and the night-light burning. He saw that the bed had not been slept in. An arm-chair was drawn up to the table on which the lamp stood. Lying by the lamp was an opened volume, its leaves crushed, as if it had been thrown down in great haste. He saw that it was Spenser's poems, and that it was open at the "Epithalamium." The housekeeper had followed him.

"Have you sent yet to Miss Wharton's?"

"No, sir. We didn't want to alarm her."

"He may be there. I'll drive over."

Carlton knew the moment he saw Isabel Wharton's face that Arnold was not there, and she knew in the same instant why Carlton had come. She stood in the doorway, her face very white against the gloom, very white and still, as if she had known for a long time what the dawn of her wedding day would bring. There was presage of coming horror in the calmness.

"He may have gone for a walk," Carlton said, the words sounding foolish as he spoke them.

"No," she answered quietly. "I think I know where we will find him."

"You know?"

"I fear."

She stood for a moment irresolute; then she said, "Let the groom stay here with the dog-cart. It's a long way around, but across fields it is short. We can walk."

She threw a golf cape over her shoulders and joined Carlton. She had no hat on, and the damp east wind blew stray locks of hair about her face. She went straight across the fields with a seeming certainty of her goal that filled her companion with a nameless horror. They went through a wood, and the air was full of flying leaves. The gray, ragged clouds seemed just beyond the rocking tree-tops. She did not break the silence, and Carlton's own apprehension had passed the bounds of speech.

They had walked about a mile and a half when in the distance Carlton saw a graveyard. Then he knew her goal.

She went directly to a certain deserted quarter of it, where the poorer graves were, but before they came to the one she was seeking, Carlton saw what the end of the quest was to be.

The dead form of Robert Arnold was lying face downward on the damp leaves, with one arm convulsively clasped about a rough, grass-grown mound. The small, rude stone at the head had something carved on it. Bending over, Carlton read the initials "J. A.," and the date, "1850."



A Bride in Ultimate.*

BY DON MARK LEMON.



"In God's name, sign the passport and let me go!"

"Pardon, Monsieur; my signature will not make good the passport. Monsieur must a new passport obtain from his legate."

"A new one! It will take hours — days — to do that, and *he* will be out of my reach by morning."

"Monsieur, it is the law."

"The law! Shall this man be allowed to rob me of my dearest possession, while the law binds me here hand and foot? Must I delay for a needless sheet of paper while every minute takes him nearer the sea coast and farther from me? Can't you see my cause is honest? Can't you understand that I am no fugitive — that I want only to come up with this man? That he has robbed me, and these formalities that help to cover his flight are an outrage against justice!"

"Pardon, Monsieur; if the gentleman has robbed you, it is best for you to wait here and let the law — the officials, Monsieur — seek him."

"The law again!"

"Yes, Monsieur."

"Then I have lost her forever!" The traveller, who for some ten minutes had been pleading with the courteous official to honor his expired passport and allow him to cross from France into Spain, sank down upon a chair in the private quarters of the French railway station and buried his face in his hands.

"Lost *her*, Monsieur?" the official questioned, with a new show of interest. "Is it a lady?"

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"Yes!" the other groaned. "He has robbed me of my wife!"

"And the lady?"

"Is with him."

"Pardon again, Monsieur; the gentleman you seek journeyed alone. Ah, Monsieur is mistaken! He need not despair! Take courage! The gentleman journeyed alone!"

"No, I say. She is with him — and as helpless as the dead."

"Monsieur!"

"I say, yes — she is with him."

"In spirit, Monsieur?"

"In body."

"Will Monsieur explain to the officials how the gentleman has robbed him of his wife? We have the telegraph and may the gentleman detain before he reaches the sea coast. But if Monsieur will listen, he will learn how the gentleman was not accompanied by a lady, nor by a servant attended."

"The lady is dead!" came the amazing reply.

"Dead, Monsieur!" exclaimed the official. "Ah!" A doubt as to the other's sanity seemed to strike the Frenchman and he looked about uneasily. "Will Monsieur read to pass the time?" he questioned.

"Read!" The American traveller laughed an unpleasant laugh. Then his smothered impatience broke out. "Can't I follow him on foot without a passport?"

"No, Monsieur; not into territory Spanish."

"May death stop him then!" the other cried with uplifted hands.

The Frenchman's suspicions deepened; but, courteous even to a madman, he only begged the other to have patience.

"Yes, I know that you think I rave," the American broke in, passionately; "and you would think me mad if I told you the whole truth. Yet I say he has robbed me of my wife and she is with him in person. You, yourself, saw her."

"Pardon, Monsieur; I saw her not."

"Did he not wear a great diamond upon his hand?"

"Monsieur is right."

"Then —"

"It was a pool of light, Monsieur," continued the Frenchman.

"Ah, it is Monsieur's jewel, and so lovely that he calls it his wife!"

"It *is* my wife!" came the amazing reply.

For a moment the other was wholly nonplussed. Then he questioned: "Has Monsieur wedded a jewel?"

"No — I have wedded no jewel. That stone, I say, is no jewel; it is a woman — my wife — flesh and blood! Ah, honor the passport and let me go! I swear to you I am no fugitive — I swear to you I will do this man no harm. It is the ring I want, and, when I have it again, you shall see for yourself that I speak the truth; you shall see this diamond — the strangest and loveliest thing in the wide world." The face of the American bespoke sincerity, though his words seemed sheer raving.

"There is the telegraph, Monsieur, and the officials. Let Monsieur have the gentleman detained."

"I fear to act so," the other answered. "This diamond might tempt some high Spanish official, or the King of Spain himself."

The Frenchman expostulated.

"I mean it — every word. Has it not tempted my dearest friend to rob me? No, no! I must follow him and get the jewel back without any learning of its lovely nature."

"But I, Monsieur?" the other questioned, with a bow.

"I can trust in you," replied the American, politely.

"Ah!" The official glowed with the high compliment.

"But what is to be done?"

"Monsieur, let me think." The Frenchman began to pace back and forth the length of his private quarters, now tugging nervously at his beard, now excitedly gesticulating to himself. "Ah, Monsieur!" he finally exclaimed, coming to a standstill before the American; "the next train comes not till morning; you must a new passport obtain; it will take — I cannot tell Monsieur how many hours. I despair!"

A groan arose to the lips of the American, but was stifled by the sudden clanging of a bell, a hiss of escaping steam and the rumble of car wheels without. Both men rushed to the door and out upon the platform. An engine with three passenger coaches attached drew into the station from the wrong direction and contrary to official time. What was wrong? The men were soon to learn.

Two coaches from the rear of the train which had drawn out of the station about half an hour before had broken from their couplings and been wrecked and, a high French official being among the number injured, the engineer had reversed his engine and returned for surgical aid into French territory.

Despite the tragic nature of this return, the American gave a cry of joy and began searching among the passengers for the fugitive — the false friend who had robbed him of his ring.

That friend was not to be found among the living, nor among the injured, and four of the five dead had already been removed from the rear coach to the station! Would the fifth and last corpse be that of the fugitive?

Brushing by the porters, the American leapt to where the fifth dead body lay, crushed and mangled past recognition save by its clothing, and — yes, the great white Polar Star-like diamond that flamed upon a finger of its bloodless hand!

Tearing the splendid jewel away, the American brought it passionately to his lips and murmured: "Darling, look up! *I* am here!"

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"Will Monsieur show me the ring?" the French station official questioned, when again in his private quarters alone with the American.

The latter drew the jewel from his breast and handed it with a powerful magnifying glass to the Frenchman. "Look at the heart of the stone through the glass," he said, softly.

The official did as he was bidden and a cry of astonishment escaped him.

"Monsieur, it is divine!"

"Divine! It is the work of God himself! Is not *He* an artist?"

The Frenchman turned again to the diamond in the ring and for fully five minutes gave it his unbroken attention, scarcely breathing, as if he trembled to dim for a moment the magnifying glass or the limpid gem beneath. And well might the jewel hold his gaze, for in the heart of the perfect forty-carat stone, attired in simple Grecian costume, with a red rose in the dark hair, lay in repose the minute, exquisite figure of a woman. The human eyes were half veiled, the lips lightly parted with a smile, the cheeks taking

their color it seemed from the rose twined low in the dark hair, and the forehead and breast like glowing ivory. The lovely face, too, caught an added loveliness from its exquisite minuteness, and the contour of the perfectly formed body and limbs showed life-like through the delicate apparel.

And now, as the hand that held the stone trembled, and rich purple and orange lights played over the surface of the diamond, or, stabbing deeper, bathed those delicate limbs in prismatic fire, it seemed indeed that the Ideal had wrought a perfect work.

"Monsieur, she?"

"Is human."

"Ah!"

"Yes — and once a divine and stately woman."

"Monsieur, how?"

"She was my bride, and, as she reclined one day within a large artificial crystal, diamond-shaped — we were rehearsing for an entertainment in which she was to appear as the spirit of the diamond — as she reclined in the attitude which she now keeps, somehow — I don't know exactly how, but I think that the crystal in which she was imprisoned had been made of an unknown sand with some strange inherent quality — somehow a bolt of lightning leapt out of the clear sky, that mysterious crystal seemed to draw down upon itself all the electricity in heaven, and when I found my sight again this diamond lay at my feet."

"And, Monsieur, *this* is your bride?"

"Yes, yes!" A great passion shook the speaker and his voice broke painfully. "The force of the lightning compressed that crystal and her sweet body into what you see — into ultimate form."

Once more the Frenchman gazed for a while into the heart of the lovely stone, then, holding the ring tenderly in the hollow of his hand, returned it to the American.

"Monsieur, it is a jewel for a deity."

The other made no immediate reply, but stood looking upon the exquisite form in the diamond as a lover looks into the face of his beloved. Finally, he said: "She is not dead to me, and while I thus have her with me I care not what I suffer."

He took the ring from the hollow of his hand and was about to place it upon his finger — the diamond inward — when the lovely

jewel slipped from his hold and fell to the floor. As it came in contact with the hard tiles, there was a slight explosive sound and a shower of minute scintillating particles seemed to burst from the ring itself and scatter like dust on the air.

With a cry of horror, the American stooped and snatched up the ring. *The diamond was gone utterly from its setting!*

That lovely figure in the heart of the stone had been a centre of weakness, like a carbon spot in a natural diamond, and, upon coming into sharp contact with the flooring, the stone had exploded, exactly as a Prince Rupert's drop does when the end is broken away.

"My God!"

The words were a shriek, and the American staggered back against the wall, his face drawn with unspeakable agony.

"Monsieur! Monsieur! Monsieur!"

The American's right hand made a quick backward movement.

"She never died till now!" he cried. "Oh, my God!"

There was a glint of steel, a sharp report, and, as the Frenchman rushed forward, the other pitched headlong to his feet, *dead!*



Where is Robert Palmer? *

BY I. CRANE CLARK.



ROBERT PALMER was my brother-in-law. Inasmuch as the public has read the account of his mysterious disappearance, and as I have heard many conjectures concerning his probable fate, I think it but meet that I should publish a letter which I have received, and which may aid some people in arriving at a conclusion as to his fate, although, to my mind, it serves only to make the matter more weird and strange.

Robert Palmer was the husband of my sister, Alice. He was well-to-do, healthy and happy. His home relations were the most pleasant and his business affairs flourishing. He was a member of several well-known city Clubs, but mostly frequented a select little affair on Yetton Street, of which he and several warm friends were charter members. He was last seen on the evening of November 1st at the Club on Yetton Street, and the most diligent search by expert detectives had failed to find even the slightest clue to his whereabouts or fate until the receipt of the letter to which I have referred. This letter, addressed to me, William C. Buckner, and signed William Clinton,—a name unknown to me,—was dated Nov. 15, 1902. As I give it entire, no quotation marks are necessary. It was as follows:

I am a stranger to you. I was an intimate friend, however, of poor Bob Palmer. I may as well come to the point at once. I write for the purpose of giving you information concerning your ill-fated brother-in-law. I sat at the Yetton Street Club last night when his unfortunate wife (now widow) called to ask if anything had been heard of her husband. I had heard of her previous visits there, but this was the first one I had witnessed, and the

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sight of her distress, as she wavered between hope and despair and begged for news of her husband, has prompted me to dispel the doubts surrounding that husband's fate and to end her suspense at once. This letter will be deposited in the mail by a friend of mine. I am going abroad, and will be unable to leave my future address, as indeed, I hardly know my own plans. These are the facts:

Bob Palmer and myself were members of the Yetton Street Club. You were, perhaps, aware of Bob's unusual political ideas. He was not as patriotic as some of his friends could have wished. In fact, he considered our form of government a theory and not a fact. He held that, while our government made it possible for all to have equal rights, in actual practice it fell far short of its possibilities. He was noted for his sympathy and friendship for the unemployed and the poor — the weak and the oppressed. He would never state whether he was a Socialist, or just what he was in his political beliefs, but he would deny that he was an anarchist, which was a nickname that some of us had given to him. He, however, claimed that his was the only true patriotism. "Would you have a churchman worship the cross and never know the Christ it represented?" he would ask. "If you fellows are patriots, what are you patriotic about? Is it the governmental figure-head, or do you have a real regard for the people themselves, and treat them justly and kindly and respectfully?" Whatever his political faith, it is certain that he was sincere and earnest, and, if anything, a little too ready to put into practice whatever he might think was right. I simply mention this to throw light upon the event which I am about to relate.

James Carnegie was also a member of our Club. Carnegie is (or rather was) an amateur hypnotist. He had always claimed powers in this line, but of late he had become the protégé of a professional hypnotist, and stated that he was making great progress. It was arranged that Bob and myself should witness some of his experiments, and we had agreed to meet him at the club at 8.30 on the evening of November first, and he was to have on hand two or three newsboys whom he had coaxed and paid into promising to act as subjects upon whom he might exercise his uncertain powers.

The three of us were on hand at the appointed hour. We secured a private room, and Carnegie gave instructions that when the newsboys arrived they should be admitted. A game of cards, cigars and drinks served to while away the time until nearly ten o'clock, when it became evident that Carnegie's subjects had repented of their promise, and that the original purpose of our meeting must be dropped for the time being. Both Bob and myself had been very sceptical as to Carnegie's powers as a hypnotist, and the non-appearance of the newsboys left room for one of us to express a bantering doubt as to his ability. In reply, Carnegie defied either of us to subject ourselves to his influence. Bob laughingly offered himself, saying, "I will be your victim." He little dreamed how true were his words.

"I should judge that you would make a good subject," said Carnegie. "The only thing that would hinder would be the application of the old truism that familiarity breeds contempt, but to overcome this let me seriously tell you that hypnotism is becoming a definite science, and that by study and natural aptitude one advances in it the same as he would in medicine, astronomy, or the like. I do not joke with you when I state that I have developed marked powers as a hypnotist. You can assist me by trying to believe that I do possess this power, which should be an easy matter, as it is the truth, and a perfectly natural truth. When people laugh at what they call my crankiness, I have the satisfaction in return of laughing at their ignorance."

While talking, Carnegie had arranged two chairs facing one another, and he now invited Bob to be seated in one. Bob seated himself with a nervous laugh, for Carnegie's manner had convinced him, as well as myself, that he was thoroughly in earnest, and had silenced our ridicule. Carnegie took the other chair, while I remained an interested spectator.

"Now," said Carnegie, "if you really wish to assist me you should adapt yourself to obeying my will even before I gain an influence over you. For instance: "Shut your eyes. Open them. Fold your arms. Unfold them. Stand up. Sit down."

Carnegie gave these commands in a curt, sharp tone of voice, and they were promptly obeyed by Bob, although it was plain that the latter was simply following instructions, and had not surren-

dered himself to the former's will by any means. Meanwhile Carnegie gave his whole mind and attention to the task before him. He appeared oblivious of my presence. His muscles seemed to contract. There was something panther-like in the manner in which he crouched upon his seat. His face assumed a hard, drawn expression. He became a quivering mass of suppressed activity, which manifested itself in his keen, black eyes, the latter glowing and expanding and lighting up until a veritable black flame seemed to shoot from their depths, concentrating itself in a gaze so intense and penetrating that even I, who was not its object, became so fascinated that it was with an effort that I withdrew my attention from the hypnotist to look at his subject. The operations of the former were evidently making an impression upon Bob, who returned Carnegie's gaze with an intent, half-puzzled expression upon his face. Suddenly he raised his hand to his brow and struck out faintly toward Carnegie, as though to ward off the influence which he realized was seeking to overpower him, rising partly from his chair at the same time, and giving vent to a constrained laugh.

"Sit down!" Carnegie had arisen and his whole being entered into his voice and blazed out of his eyes as he gave the command. Bob obeyed. A triumphant look spread over Carnegie's face, and with a faint-hearted feeling of awe I realized that we were fairly launched upon our voyage into the unknown mysteries of hypnotism. Carnegie's efforts, however, were not abated. He now leaned forward, with his piercing gaze still riveted upon Bob's eyes, part of the time softly stroking his brow with his hands, and part of the time making strange passes before his eyes, which would have appeared ridiculous to one who could not have seen the wonderful effect they were producing upon the subject. Upon dropping back into his seat, the puzzled, dazed look deepened in Bob's face. His eyes became listless and finally closed, and with a deep sigh he allowed his head to sink upon his breast, and surrendered himself to the strange influence which had been forced upon him. He appeared to be in an unnatural sleep. His face was colorless. His breathing was not audible, nor was there any rising and falling of his bosom to indicate that he breathed at all. Indeed, he was apparently in a state of com-

plete exhaustion, and it seemed doubtful that he still lived. I glanced apprehensively at Carnegie. The appearance of the latter reassured me somewhat. His muscles had relaxed. The unnatural light had faded from his eyes, and a relieved expression had overspread his countenance. He stood calm and collected, with his right hand resting lightly upon the forehead of our unconscious friend, a few glistening beads of perspiration being the only evidence of the struggle in which he had engaged.

"He is now completely under my influence," he said, turning to me with a grim smile. "I am master of his body and of his mind. He will obey my slightest command. He will believe my most improbable tale. What shall I tell him?"

Then I did a very foolish thing. I suppose it was because my feelings had been so intense and serious for the last few minutes that I experienced a sort of reaction. At any rate, I went to the other extreme, and instead of regarding the condition of poor Bob in the sober manner which it merited, I attempted a silly joke.

"Why," said I, "tell him that he is an anarchist, and that the world is a great big bombshell, with which he will be able to blow up and destroy the universe."

Carnegie seemed to hesitate for a moment, and then said, "Well, there can be no harm." Turning his attention to Bob he caused him to open his eyes, saying to him, "Bob, I suppose you know that you are the greatest anarchist that ever lived? It has been decided to reveal to you that this earth is nothing but a great bombshell, and that by blowing it up you can destroy the universe."

Bob slowly rose to his feet, Carnegie carefully rising also, and standing in front of him.

"Yes," said Bob, "I am indeed an anarchist. I am an enemy of law. The law is a swindle — a cheat. At each hampered step which science has taken in the march of progress the law has stood before her and barred her passage. When ignorance and superstition have bowed their heads to the opinion of intellect the law has been the last to release its straining grasp on iniquity and injustice, and the law of nature is the most unjust and cruel of all. But I can put a stop to it. I can put a stop to it all. I

will use the law of nature to defeat the law of nature. To me has been given the secret of striking the balance."

His voice had risen to a shout, and reaching into his vest pocket he drew forth a match which he lighted, and continued, "This match I will apply to the gas which escapes from the little opening at my feet, and thus will I blow up the very universe itself."

"No, no," said Carnegie, now interfering, "You do not really mean that you are an anarchist. You are mistaken. While it takes the law a long time to reach some evils, yet the general effect of the law is good, and even this slowness to correct these evils which you complain of is, in one sense, a good point in the law. It gives to the law the quality of conservatism, and men have even said of the law that it is the crystallized wisdom of the ages. Believe me, human law based upon natural law is a very good thing indeed."

"Why," said Bob, becoming calm at once, "what you say sounds very reasonable, and I believe it is true. How foolish I was to want to explode this great bombshell on which this building stands. Think of it! Twenty-five thousand miles around! What energy it possesses! My God! I have dropped the match!"

A look of awful horror overspread Bob's features, and then — *Carnegie and I were the only occupants of the room!* Poor Bob Palmer was gone. He had stood there an instant, with that look of intense consternation upon his face, and then there had been a cold draft of air and a sound like the sharp clicking of glass overhead, and at that same instant of time Bob Palmer had disappeared from the spot where he had stood with our startled eyes upon him, while in the skylight above the room there had appeared an oblong hole about eighteen inches in length, which had not been there before. Investigation afterwards showed that there were no broken pieces of glass about, and the appearance of the glass that was still in place made it apparent that it had been broken by a force so incredibly swift as to melt it about the edges of the hole.

That's all I know. Three days afterwards one of his relatives and I placed Carnegie in a private insane asylum and the physician in charge stated that he was incurably insane. I fear that my own reason will give way soon. I keep asking myself "Where

is Robert Palmer? Where is Robert Palmer?" and the answer to this ever-recurring query is so staggering that it turns my mind. Things being as they are, I do not see that it can be of any advantage to you to disturb poor Carnegie about the matter, and as for myself you will probably never hear of me again. An officer of the Trust Company in which Carnegie was interested will call on the widow of Robert Palmer and inform her of certain provisions which have been made for her.

In conclusion I can only ask that the family and friends of Robert Palmer will think of me as leniently as possible after reading this candid statement of my connection with the events leading up to his disappearance.

.
That was the letter. I am forced to believe it. There is no other explanation. I have investigated, and I find that Carnegie is in an asylum as stated, and that he had been taking lessons in hypnotism for some time prior to the disappearance of my brother-in-law, and in addition to this my sister has been informed by the trust company that she will receive the dividends upon a handsome sum held by them in trust for that purpose.

And now I, too, am continually bothered with the question, "Where is Robert Palmer?" Is the power of mind infinite? Can it hurl bodies through space at a rate of speed such as would be produced by the explosion of a dynamite bomb the size of the earth? Does Robert Palmer's dust mingle with the distant stars? Does his soul survive after such an awful shock? Where, indeed, is Robert Palmer?



The Spirit of the Fan.*

BY BEATRICE E. RICE.



THE fan had been sent to me, with a lacquered gong and a tiny jade elephant, from Nagasaki, Japan. It was of ordinary workmanship, with absolutely nothing about it to excite any unusual curiosity. The slender sticks were of cedar wood enameled black, and the upper section of stiff white paper, gilded on one side and decorated on the other with a small house, quite crooked as to outline and blurred as to coloring. Examining the fan more closely I was able to discern, apparently creeping from the doorway of this dwelling, a most villainous-looking individual, garbed in the dress of his country, girded about the waist with a brilliant red sash. The muscular body was slightly bent, and the clawlike fingers of the right hand clutched the hilt of a long, slender weapon, something like a dagger in shape, the sharp point steeped as though in blood, dark drops of which fell from the blade. My attention, however, was more especially attracted to what seemed to have been a freak of the artist's fancy or a piece of clear, sheer carelessness. One ear was entirely missing from the creature's ugly head, while the other one had been most prominently delineated.

"A crude enough bit of work," I thought, "yet what a world of fiendish deviltry has been depicted on that small painted countenance," for the black eyes slanted a look of most atrocious vindictiveness straight into mine, and I actually found myself shuddering as I gazed back into them. In the left-hand lower corner of the fan a few scarlet letters had been scrawled, which I took to be the painter's signature, now partially obliterated by a dark-colored splash.

As I, half-interestedly, let my eyes rest upon the rough yet picturesque sketching, I was of a sudden surprised into something

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akin to excitement. It might have been a trick of imagination, but I could have sworn, at the moment, that a faint light had appeared in one of the tiny windows of the crooked house. I rose and, going to the centre table, turned up the lamp to a brighter flame and, taking up a powerful magnifying glass that lay near at hand, I held it at a good focusing distance above the house, which at first seemed merely a daub of black and yellow with the wavering outlines accentuated by the strong glass, and just as I had arrived at the conclusion that a trick of vision had been at fault, and half closed the fan to lay it aside, again that will-o'-the-wisp of light signaled me, first at one window and then the other.

I hastily turned the flame of the lamp down until only a thread of gold ran along the wick-edge, and retreating to a far, shadowy corner of the library I looked again upon the fan, when, without doubt, the windows shone brilliantly and even seemed to widen until with little difficulty I could see the interior of the room. "Some trick of those clever little Japanese," I muttered to myself, and curiously turned the fan over to see if I could discover any concealed mechanism that would warrant the effect produced so strangely, but the back of the fan displayed only an expanse of dull gilt, relieved with one or two pink-billed herons, and luxuriant lotus blooms. I quickly turned the other side about and exclaimed aloud with astonishment.

Years ago, when a child at the seaside, I remember being taken to view a camera obscura, in which I had been able to recognize my playmates, apparently about an inch in height, moving around in their natural manner. My present sensation was much the same as I had experienced on that occasion, save that in this instance I seemed to be looking upon an exquisite bit of old Satsuma inspired with life.

Before my eyes a human being, perfectly formed, although greatly reduced in size, was moving here and there in the lighted room of the house on the fan. The small face resembled a wonderful piece of ivory carving as it rested against its dusky background of blue-black hair, waxed and folded, looped and coiled into an elaborate coiffure "a la Japonaise" and decorated gorgeously with gilded pins and creamy white japonica buds. A splash of gold accentuated the brilliant scarlet of the full under lip and

the transparent folds of a pink under-gown cast soft, rosy flushes against the white neck and throat, while the outer kimono of tenderest green and silver showed slashes of pearl color where the flowing sleeves fell open and back from the rounded arms. A wide "obis" of rose brocade encircled the waist broadly and was tied, or rather, padded against the back like a miniature knapsack while the small feet were encased in lacquered sandals.

I wondered vaguely if she was an "ok' san," of high degree or a favorite "geisha," but finally made up my mind that she must be a professional artist, for, after a few preliminary birdlike movements she drew the folds of her robes around her to her satisfaction and sank nimbly down amidst the twisting silver and green of her draperies, upon a square of figured "tatami" on the floor and began busily sorting fans of every variety of shape and kind, which she took from the papier-mâché box that stood beside her. After arranging an outlay of paints, brushes and saucers on a bamboo stool, she proceeded to work rapidly at decorating the fans spreading all around her, her tiny hands moving swiftly and deftly and her expression one of complete absorption in her work.

Presently, I saw her lean her head a little to one side and, placing one hand with palm slightly curved against her ear, listen attentively, and then, rising precipitously to her feet and scattering her gaily-colored fans far and wide, run quickly back of one of the paper partitions or screens that divided the room into sections. My curiosity had now become so intense that I felt I must not lose sight of her for even an instant and I found, much to my delight, that by holding the fan at a certain angle I could see her shadow quite plainly reflected against the screen.

Evidently her abrupt exit had been caused by the arrival of someone, whose dark reflection gave the impression of a tall, broad-shouldered man in uniform. The shadows advanced toward each other, lengthening, shortening, wavering, retreating, swaying and bowing as shadows will. Then the man held out his arms to the woman. Again and yet again he embraced her. Bending his head to hers, he imprinted a kiss upon her forehead. For a moment she stood with bowed head, as though receiving a benediction, her hands, held closely between his own, resting against his breast. After a time she gently withdrew one hand and slipping

it into the loose drapery of the pink kimono she drew out a small folded paper which she thrust into his fingers, closing them over it, and, carrying his hand to her lips, she kissed it repeatedly.

As I watched with breathless interest the little romance being enacted before me I was impressed with a feeling of foreboding evil and with an uncanny sensation such as is generally produced by the contiguity of an unseen presence. I shortly understood the reason of this feeling for at the furthest end of the lighted room I saw the bamboo curtain swinging before the half-open door move gently to one side, almost imperceptibly, as though stirred by a summer wind. And then, creeping softly, softly, very stealthily beneath the curtain, came the creature from the outside of the house on the fan. With sinuous, snakelike motion he glided toward the partition that separated him from the other inmates of the room. With bent head he listened, listened, making at the same time frightful contortions of the face, and strange wicked gestures. I could have screamed aloud from very horror. How could I let the man and woman know they were being watched? I made an effort to rap upon the fan, but had my brain been stupified by the fumes of opium I could not have been more powerless to speak or move. It seemed as if I had been placed under some hypnotic spell and then summoned as a silent witness.

Cautiously he knelt beside the screen and drew from the bagging sleeve of his blouse the knife — long, thin-bladed and keen — but, as I did not fail to note, without the sickening stain on the point that had been there when my attention had first been called to his pictured presence. He tried the glittering edge along the end of his girdle, slitting it, as if by magic, at a touch, and then grinned hatefully.

That a tragedy, which I could in no wise prevent, was to take place before me I felt sure, yet dumbly prayed that someone might come, or some unforeseen happening might occur to betray the creature's presence before it was too late. His intention was evidently not to kill the lovers as they stood, nor yet to surprise them by a sudden onslaught, for he still crouched close to the partition, almost hidden by the owari jardinières holding the small cumquot trees, golden with their yellow fruit, the one hideous blot on the harmonious color scheme of the pretty room; watching, watching

and waiting until the man's shadow, slowly, reluctantly retreated from view. Then back to the room came the woman, tripping lightly. It seemed as if I could almost hear the click of her little sandals on the polished floor and I imagined that some plaintive song of Japan issued from the softly parted cherry lips to be surprised into silence as she came upon the figure partially concealed next the screen. She must utter a shriek, I thought, and yet I'm sure she smothered one, for the small hands flew up to her mouth and covered it tightly as though she tried to suppress all sound. It flashed through my mind that she did not make outcry fearing lest her lover should return at first signal of her distress and share with her a deadly fate. A look of frightful, unutterable fear overspread the beautiful face and the widening eyes looked pitifully wild and appealing as the wretch rose menacingly from his position and sprang toward her. One sinewy hand curved cruel fingers about the slender throat. She swayed weakly, clutching at the brawny chest and struggling madly to push him from her. The knife — ugh! I shrieked aloud — was thrust deep into that exquisite body and drawn out. A white hand fluttered to the hilt. Again it was plunged deep, deep —

"You fiend! Help! Murder! will no one come!" I screamed, wildly flinging the fan far from me.

"Why, Constance," exclaimed my husband, entering the room at a dead run, "what in the name of all Bedlamites is the matter with you?" but my only response to his question was to fall forward an unconscious heap into his outstretched arms.

When I came to myself, over and over again I tried to explain it all to him, and, although inclined to laugh at me, together we examined the house on the fan, which appeared in its ordinary state of crooked outline, while the face of the earless wretch remained darkly inscrutable and the windows of the dwelling dim.

Finally, after much coaxing and cajoling, I prevailed upon my husband to send the fan, and a letter with it, back to the young officer of the *Octopus*, from whom I had received it.

Weeks lengthened into months, and still no answer came to the missive, and the incident by mutual consent had been buried by us, until one day at luncheon a long, white envelope was handed in by the postman.

"Quick, quick! Richard," I cried excitedly, pouring tea on the tablecloth and diligently sopping it up with a biscuit, "Open it, do! it's from Japan, I can see the postmark from where I sit."

Almost as much interested, if not as much excited as myself, he broke the seal and read aloud to me the following:

DEAR REX:

Tell Mrs. Rex, with my best compliments, that she bids fair to rival Mme. Blavatsky or even the abnormal Ann O'Delia. Joking aside though, old man, that little wife of yours must be endowed with mediumistic powers. That fan was the direct means of aiding in the arrest, and the subsequent putting to death of one Wong Ling Foo, a half-breed Jap, who was responsible for the death of O Yamashiro San, the Japanese wife of Lieut. James Roderick, U. S. N. You met him in Washington in '98. The woman informed her husband of the intended uprising of a certain colony in Nagasaki in the hearing of her murderer, who, being one of the conspirators, and suspecting the woman, to whom he was related, of treason, concealed himself in her apartment during the interview with Lieut. Roderick. When the latter left the house, Wong Ling sprang upon his victim, stabbing her repeatedly, but after leaving her to all appearances dead, she must have managed to scrawl a picture of the wretch, and his name on the fan, trusting that her husband would find it and recognize the man from the peculiar facial deformity, which perhaps you noticed. The fan, however, became the property of the merchant for whom Mrs. Roderick did some decorating, hence your wife's present, which I purchased from the same merchant. I never have taken much stock in the occult, but Mrs. R's vision, dream, or whatever it may be called, is one of the most incomprehensible things that ever happened, and on the strength of it Lieut. Roderick brought that brute of a heathen to justice. Remember me with best regards to your wife, and believe me,

Yours very sincerely,

CHARLES SIBLEY BRIGGS, U. S. N.

The lacquered gong and the little elephant of jade still occupy their places among my treasured bibelots, but I am sure I should have taken no further pleasure in the possession of poor Mrs. Roderick's fan.



The Black Roses.*

BY ANNA MCCLURE SHOLL.



THE bareness of the lofty frescoed room had been relieved by hangings of ancient tapestry where was portrayed in dim green tints, as of sea depths, the story of Circe. Swinging lamps and yellow candles, thick as a man's wrist, in tall, ecclesiastical candlesticks, cast a soft light o'er the sombre antique furniture. Great brass bowls of red roses made splashes of color in the deep shadows.

In a high carved arm-chair, by the open wood-fire a woman sat, listening and waiting. She wore a loose gown of a soft, diaphanous material, whose whiteness was thrown into relief by the mantle of black fur, just slipping from her shoulders. She, herself, was of a strange type of beauty, the clear pallor of her skin, like the petal of a white rose, being in vivid contrast to her jet black hair and dark eyes. She might have served to personify night.

After a time she arose and paced the room restlessly, pausing at the great tapestried bed to turn down the coverlet, and to touch with her lips an instant the violets just beneath the ebony-and-ivory crucifix at the bed's head. Then she drew aside the curtains of a window, and looked out for a moment on the moonlit garden, and on the lights of Florence, far below in the valley. They had lived in the villa already three months, she and her husband, yet in that time they had visited the beautiful city but once. He was absorbed in his chemical experiments, and she was absorbed in him.

She heard his step now in the corridor, and her heart leaped with expectancy. He entered and stood for a moment in the shadow, a youthful figure still, despite his bent shoulders and furrowed brow, and the look of age imparted by the skull-cap and long furred coat which he wore.

For a moment she could not see what he carried in his arms,

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but she divined from his air of exaltation that his latest experiment had been successful. As she crossed the room, a graceful figure in her long white draperies, he held out to her his precious burden, twelve coal-black roses. She gave a cry of delight.

"Oh, how beautiful! Basil, how did you do it?"

He smiled as he watched her caress the ebony petals with her white finger tips, and brush their soft blackness against the pale oval of her cheek.

"That I cannot tell any one—even you! You wished for a black rose. Your husband is a magician," he went on playfully, "and you have your heart's desire!"

She sank into the arm-chair by the fire, the roses on her lap, a dark mass against the delicate tissues of her robe. Here and there the firelight caught the intense green of the unchanged foliage.

"What are they like?" she cried, holding one against her face. "They are witch-flowers now, uncanny midnight things. Ah! I know. They are like the soul of Lucrezia Borgia."

Her husband adjusted the black fur mantle about her shoulders.

"No, no, you must not call them ugly names, sweetheart, for I mean them to personify you. You are a dark rose—with your midnight hair and eyes."

"*'Du bist wie eine Blume'*? Ah, the poet never thought of such a flower, I'm sure. They misnamed me who called me Rosamond. But tell me, Basil, did you have to mingle a great many poisons to produce this effect?"

"Yes, a great many. But they have annulled each other, though they destroyed the rose perfume in the process."

"The loss is slight. I love them, these black roses. They fascinate me. Suppose I should decorate the wayside shrine with them at the garden gate!"

"The peasants would stone you for a witch, I fear. No, Rosamond, keep them in your bed-chamber."

"I shall put them by my bed now, and ring for Santuzza to take away these other flowers. I want my black roses to reign alone."

She crossed the room, and from an inlaid cabinet took out a fantastically carved vase of rich green malachite. In this she arranged the roses.

"How heavy they are! One would think they were overbur-

dened. How well they suit the vase! They shall give me rare dreams! You are not going back to the laboratory? It is past midnight. Isn't this achievement enough for one day?"

"Dearest, I have another experiment still uncompleted. Go to your rest and dream of your roses."

He kissed her and went away, his footsteps echoing along the stone corridors that led to the laboratory. She stretched herself upon the bed, and lay for a long time between sleeping and waking, the light from a swinging lamp falling across her face, one heavy black rose just brushing the pure whiteness of her cheek.

Her husband worked in his laboratory until the morning sun was gilding the domes and towers of Florence. Tired out at last, by a prolonged and unsuccessful experiment, he left his work to go to his bedroom. As he passed his wife's room he saw that the door was ajar. He reached out a hand to close it, lest the morning sounds through the house should disturb her; but in the act he caught a glimpse of something by her bed which made him turn faint with a sudden nameless horror. The roses in the malachite vase had become white again, and were gleaming ghostly in the pale radiance of the swinging lamp. Knowing the nature of the poisons imprisoned—he had thought forever—in the black roses, a terrible fear possessed him. In making their escape from those petals, now of innocent pallor, where had they gone!

"Rosamond!" His voice shook as he called her name.

There was no answer.

"Rosamond! Rosamond!"

His tones were now loud and terrified. No answer came from the dark shadow of the bed. He drew nearer, cold with apprehension. Something very black was outlined against the whiteness of the linen. A great horror sickened him. For an instant he paused, shaking as with ague. He dared not go nearer, dared not look. What was this in the bed! By a supreme effort he reached the window-curtain, and pulled it aside. The morning light streamed in, revealing the form of his wife, quite dead, and black as if carved out of ebony.





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Through the Mirror.*

BY CHARLES H. PLUMMER.



ONLY fifteen dollars offered for this fine old mirror! It is preposterous, gentlemen!" And the auctioneer looked his disgust. "Why, I would be ashamed to stand there looking the thing in the face, after offering that paltry sum. The bump of reverence seems to be sadly lacking in this crowd. No doubt many beautiful women have been reflected in this mirror in some grand old parlor. Think of it! If mirrors had memories like human beings, what a beautiful story this one might be able to tell. Perhaps, to a young man of romantic turn, it could picture forth his ideal. It is worth double the price for its possible associations. Just the thing for a bachelor's den. Come, give the bachelors a chance."

The good-natured ones around the auctioneer's stand smiled their appreciation of this voluble sally. Some one in the crowd remarked: "He's all right, he's a slick one. Give him a bid."

For a moment the bidding was brisk. Then came the warning: "This is the third and last time, gentlemen. I am offered twenty dollars. Anybody go twenty-one?"

No one answered, and down came the gavel with a bang. "Sold! The lucky gentleman gets it for twenty dollars. Ten to one the gentleman is a bachelor. Am I right, sir?"

"Yes," I replied, "and you guess as well as you auctioneer."

In this way I bought the mirror, and had it sent to my apartments. It was one of those pier glasses, somewhat antiquated nowadays, with a marble base about eighteen inches from the floor. The gilt molding was a little tarnished, but that did not matter. I detested obtrusive new furniture, and when in need of an odd piece, purposely bought old to preserve the mellow effect. That night I put it into place between two bookcases.

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It takes very little to supply me with dream food. As I sat in a comfortable Morris chair opposite my new possession, indolently watching the reflection of the cigar smoke, ascending in delicate tracery of rings and spirals, the auctioneer's words came back and took hold of my imagination. Suppose mirrors had memories. Fabulous legend tells of many mirrors possessed of wonderful qualities. There was Lao's mirror that reflected one's thoughts; Cambucan's mirror foretold the approach of ill-fortune; in Reynolds's one could see what was done a mile off; and Vulcan had a mirror that showed the past, present and future. Of course, these were only fairy tales, but still, when one is in the mood, it is just such stuff that affords relaxation after poring over a lot of dry law books.

I lay back in the chair and closed my eyes, allowing my thoughts to roam. In the course of its existence this quaint old glass had certainly stood a silent spectator at many phases of the human comedy. Like an old man, it had a story to tell. If it could only embody that story on its surface again, what would be its nature? Would it be comic, dramatic, or tragic, or simply an impressionistic sketch without beginning or end? Perhaps it would all depend on the one who looked into it. All in a very short lapse of time, much of this kind of philosophy went coursing in kaleidoscopic medley with my imagination.

As I opened my eyes to give a little much-needed attention to the cigar, I was struck by the appearance of a blur in the center of the mirror, just as if some one had blown his breath upon it. It first looked like a defect, and I was chagrined at not having noticed it before. But no, as I intently watched, the blur grew, and in a few moments the whole glass was covered as with a light frost. I was amazed. The wildest kind of thoughts flashed across my mind. Was I dreaming, or were those fabulous legends not so fabulous after all?

I got up quickly and, going over to the mirror, tried to cleanse it with my handkerchief. But it was no use. It made not the slightest impression, and I put my handkerchief in my pocket, while a sense of impending mystery kept my eyes fixed upon this curious phenomenon. Though it seemed a long time, in reality it could not have been over a minute I stood thus, before a change

was again noticeable. This time the frost was evaporating. What would I see when the mirror became clear? Again the words of the auctioneer came to me. They were only spoken in a spirit of banter, but instinctively I felt there was something in them. I felt confident I should not see the prosaic reflection of my own face and room. And this expectancy was founded on more than idle fancy. There was the frost that the handkerchief failed to wipe away, and, more wonderful still, the peculiar manner in which the frost evaporated. When one blows one's breath on a glass the resulting blur starts to fade away from the edge towards the center, but this was doing directly the opposite. It was fading away from the center towards the edge. These things were to be explained, and I knew that I could not explain them.

At last the glass was as clear as though nothing unwonted had ever happened to it, and I found myself looking down the length of a large and beautifully furnished parlor. Prepared as I was for something out of the ordinary, the reality somewhat startled me. But I quickly threw this off and determined to enjoy the situation as though such things occurred every day.

From the view I got of the place, it was reasonable to suppose I was looking into the room from a situation between the two front windows. This was no doubt correct, the mirror being a pier glass. At this point my speculations were cut short by a phenomenon more surprising than any that had gone before. In through the folding doors came a young girl of perhaps twenty. Turning on her heel in the center of the floor, she came tripping down the room towards me, glide-waltz fashion, holding her skirt up archly in either hand, just enough to show two twinkling little feet, while a coquettish smile played over her face. I have never seen anything half so graceful or half so innocently playful. Familiar as that face afterwards became to me, and burnt indelibly as it now is upon my memory, I cannot describe its elusive beauty, at once tender and roguish.

My first thought as she entered the room was whether she could see me in the mirror as I could see her. I was not left long in doubt as to this. Perhaps not looking for anything out of the ordinary, she was not quick to notice any peculiarity about so familiar a piece of furniture. She soon discovered it, however, and

her vain little gambol, meant only for private eyes, came to a sudden termination, much to my sorrow. A mingled look of wonder and fright chased the smile from her face. I expected her to turn and run from the room. Not a bit of it. Though timid, she was brave, and she stood her ground courageously.

It could not have been long we stood facing each other, and I was just about to smile or do something to assure her I was no hobgoblin, when the small spot of frost began to form on the mirror again. Very small at first, it grew with incredible rapidity, and soon the glass was completely covered, effectually cutting off my view, and leaving me with a blank look of annoyance upon my face.

I sat up late that night. Revolve the thing in my mind as I would, I could make neither head nor tail of it. In the light of later events, I have arrived at my own conclusion, but it may not be accepted by all.

Four successive nights were spent far into the small hours, anxiously watching the mirror lest it repeat its odd behavior in my absence. A dinner and a dance engagement were broken, and all without avail. Nothing occurred to show that it was in any way different from other mirrors. All hope of ever seeing that winsome face again was lost. Even the fact of once having seen it was on the verge of being relegated to the limbo of pipe dreams. On the fifth night, my doubting Thomas was laid to rest.

It must have been about eleven o'clock, and I was on the point of giving up this useless vigil in despair, when, almost unawares, my patience was rewarded. The frost re-appeared, spread rapidly, and slowly faded away again before my astonished gaze, leaving me rudely staring into the quizzical face of my mirror girl.

The humor of the situation burst upon us simultaneously. Shaking a dainty but threatening finger at me, her accusing attitude seemed to say, "Ha, ha! caught peeping again, bold man." And I assumed an indignant look which expressed the rebuttal, "Caught peeping yourself, saucy girl!" Thereupon we both smiled guiltily. This is the only introduction we ever received, nor was any other ever needed, for it immediately placed us upon a friendly footing. The only thing now required was some means of communication.

I somehow knew it could not be done vocally. However, I tried, and she tried too. I saw her lips move; but it conveyed no sound to either of us. No, evidently this would not do. Another method must be devised. Some paper and a pencil lying on a table close at hand supplied the clue. Her eyes, following mine, discovered my intention, and she ran out of the room with a reassuring nod that she would not be gone long. Shortly she came back in an excited little flutter, with paper and pencil of her own. I held up what I had written in her absence: "Can you understand this curious situation?" After moistening the pencil in her mouth, she held up her paper as I had done: "No, I can't, can you!" Alternatingly holding up what we wrote, the following conversation ensued. I led off with this bit of Stoic philosophy: "Since we can't explain it, suppose we accept gracefully what the gods send us."

"A very sensible suggestion, and I am agreed," she wrote back. "It will be all sorts of fun."

"I am glad you enter into the spirit of the thing," I scribbled. "I was afraid you wouldn't."

"Do I look such a curmudgeon?" This was held up, accompanied by an exaggerated air of offended geniality.

"Not in the least," I hastened to assure her, "but the circumstances are so unusual, you know."

"That is just what makes it interesting."

"I think so too."

After a short pause, she wrote again: "Do you think the mirror will give us any more of these interviews?"

"It has happened twice," I replied, "and I firmly believe it will continue to do so until something we know nothing of interferes."

"Can't you think of some other way for future use, then? Talking with the pencil grows tiresome after the novelty wears off. Besides, writing material always scares away what I want to say."

"No, have been turning the thing over in my mind, and I can't think of anything better."

"We might talk deaf and dumb," she suggested, tentatively.

Here my motions of approbation were so vigorous that the paper dropped out of my hand. She was amused at my enthu-

siasm. Picking up the paper, I wrote hurriedly, "The very thing! I never once thought of it before. Do you know anything about it?"

"Very little now, I am afraid," was her doubtful answer. "I really believe I have forgotten the alphabet."

"It can soon be picked up again if you have once known it," was my encouraging response. "We boys used it in school to talk behind our teacher's back. I was quite proficient in the art then, and I don't suppose it would take me long to brush up again."

"Poor teacher," she commented dolefully. "But how are we to go about this 'brushing up,' as you call it?"

"In the *Encyclopædia Britannica* there is a very good illustration of the alphabet. I got all I know from that. With this as a guide, and a little practice, we should get along very well."

Going over to the bookcase, I got the required volume and came back to the mirror. The place was easily found, and standing close to the glass, we both looked into the book, my finger designating the double-handed alphabet. A nod from her assured me that this was also the one she had once known, and bade me go on with my instruction. I laid the book down and proceeded to explain. "We had better get a few letters at a time by heart, or rather by hand, and then practice doing them without the book."

This scheme progressed with surprising ease. What I had forgotten came back readily, while my pupil's memory was equally apt. In a short time we got letter perfect down to M. I had been dreading to see the frost spot for some time past; welcome as a prelude but tantalizing as a climax. Just when we were about to begin on N it made its appearance. It behaved precisely as before, and there I was alone in front of a reflection of myself, the *encyclopædia* in my hand, a pencil stuck over one ear and bits of paper strewn over the floor.

The next day was a very busy one for me; but at every spare interval a number of persistent questions kept plaguing me for an answer. Who was this girl? Did she have a corporeal existence independent of the mirror? If so, would it be possible for me to know her in that corporeal existence? I saw now that it might have been possible to have found this out by simply having ques-

tioned her last night, if I had only thought of it. At any rate, I would not fail to do so at my first opportunity.

In the evening, I watched the mirror for the familiar sign with renewed zest. There was a likelihood that I should see nothing tonight; nevertheless that did not deter me, for the thing was becoming absorbing now. It was well I was so persistent. Without giving me the long, tedious wait of the previous night, the phenomenon sprang into existence like a demonstration in magic. Both of us were used to this now, however, so when it had passed away, we greeted each other with a glad smile as friends do, minus the handshake of course. Beyond a doubt she had devoted considerable of her time during the day to the rejuvenation of her lost art of the deaf and dumb language. She immediately proceeded to spell out a few simple words for my edification. After looking properly impressed, and replying a little in kind, I signified that there was something I wished to say with pencil.

"There is something we neglected last night which might have saved us from going to this trouble about the deaf and dumb business," I wrote.

"What is it? So sorry you consider the deaf and dumb 'business' a trouble," came her supercilious note, held up in a disdainful hand.

"You misunderstand me." At this point I endeavored to look as contrite as possible. "I mean if we only knew each other in real life, and not simply through this queer mirror, all that would be unnecessary, don't you see? We could see each other whenever we pleased, and hold our little tête-à-têtes in a more natural manner."

"But how do you know I would care to hold tête-à-têtes with you in a more natural manner?" This she wrote to tease me, I suppose.

"I was only speaking for myself," I returned. "At least you owe me this to prove yourself not a coquette." On her next piece of paper was written, "I bow before your logic."

"I will write my name and address," I directed, "and you can write yours. Then, when you feel that you would like to have a real tête-à-tête you might send me a note by mail. We can outwit this mirror yet."

But I was mistaken. We could not outwit it. When our names and addresses were written, we attempted to hold the papers up for inspection. But even while our hands were making the motion, the mirror drew its curtain of frost before our astonished eyes, abruptly preventing the exchange. The failure to give warning by the appearance and growth of the frost spot was an unprecedented demonstration. And it should have taught us that further effort to establish any other relation than the one it chose to grant us would prove futile. Nevertheless, on the succeeding night, being again favored by the mirror, we made a second attempt to exchange names, but again we were frustrated in the same manner as previously.

There was but one other way for me to discover who she really was, and that way was to find out who had formerly owned the mirror. On the morning following the last failure, I went to see the auctioneer from whom I had bought the mirror. I found that he did not get it from a private party, as I had supposed, but from a storage and trust company. The clerk, who gave me this information, also told me that the mirror was put in their place for sale at the same time with a lot of other household goods. I got the date of this transaction from him, and thanked him for his trouble.

The manager of the storage and trust company was less communicative than the affable clerk. Of course I said nothing to him about the mirror, for he would have thought me crazy. Even as it was, he must have put me down as a most inquisitive fellow. After I had given him the name of the auctioneer, and the date on which the furniture was put in his place for sale, he shortly informed me that these goods had belonged to a client of theirs who was now on the continent with his family. Was there anything else he could do for me? Yes, he could give me the gentleman's name. But this he politely, though firmly, declined to do. My curiosity concerning the furniture I had bought would not justify him in breaking the rules of the company and their client's instructions. Further importunity on my part only elicited his promise to forward a letter for me to the gentleman's continental address. Later in the day I handed him a sealed letter in which was a full account of my peculiar experience with the mirror up to date.

Since this was the best that could be done, I was forced to wait patiently until a reply came. I was certain the girl was a member of the family that had owned the mirror — I could not account for her appearance in it else — and now I felt reasonably sure I had traced her successfully. It was strange to think that while the girl herself was, perhaps, in some far-off country, something, I knew not what, could appear in my glass. Whatever the real girl was, I felt that the mirror girl was different. But I could not define the difference at that time.

From this time on the mirror favored us every night. In fact, frequency of occurrence seemed to lend it facility. And, as it had metaphorically frowned down any attempt to circumvent it, we tacitly discontinued our efforts in this direction.

Neither did I say anything to her of the inquiries I had made at the auctioneer's or the trust company, nor what else I had discovered. I felt as one who is keeping a rich secret towards the day when it is to be launched as a great surprise.

We worked diligently at the deaf and dumb language for a week, and at the expiration of that time we were able to converse freely. They were pleasant evenings we spent after having accomplished this much. I learned that the moods of the mirror girl were as infinitely various as the states of the atmosphere. All of them were sweet and winning. Even her rainy-day phases were almost examples of fair weather.

On one occasion I found the parlor empty when the frost cleared off the glass. This did not trouble me at first, as it had often happened before. But after waiting for at least ten minutes without being rewarded by her appearance in the room, I became anxious lest the mirror were about to play me some new trick. Not at all. Presently a roguish head and a pair of laughing blue eyes peeped out from behind a large arm chair. Seeing that she was discovered, she jumped up, very much pleased with the success of her little joke. This was one of her ways, and it always gave her pleasure to mystify me with some such odd little conceit. And, to tell the truth, I was getting very fond of having these roguish jokes played upon me.

It was not always night in the phantom room I saw in the mirror. Sometimes the place would be filled with bright sunshine,

which, I suppose, came in through the two windows on either side of the pier glass; while my library would be illuminated by the artificial light of the gas jets. The effect was most curious. At such times I usually found her employed with some piece of embroidery or fancy work. She was exceedingly skilful at such things. For long periods, I would sit silently watching her deft fingers glide in and out of the material. If I expressed my admiration for her work, which I always did, she would naively explain the simple rules governing its construction. Many were the valuable lessons I received in the gentle art of needlework. After one of her graphic demonstrations, shading and padding lost most of their vaunted mystery; and any mere man could have seen the decided advantage that couching had over the netting stitch method. Had it not been for the fear of losing caste, I would have taken up the work myself, just for the pleasure of being under such a teacher.

I was invariably required to recite my lesson after it was over. She would ask questions, and I would answer them to the best of my ability. We called this our correspondence method. By dint of much coaching, I would get through them somehow, but over some absurd mistake, she could not keep back the laugh that would out. "Poor boy," she would console in deaf and dumb, "I don't suppose it does come to you by second nature, but never mind, you are doing wonderfully well, for a man."

Yes, I was getting on very well, but at the same time, I was losing that which I had never thought to lose; and to what? to whom?

All this was in the lighter vein, and perhaps it would have been well if I had delved no deeper, or not so deep. It is a poor miner, however, who will not work out a paying lode of gold.

I had always thought the deaf and dumb language a most ungraceful mode of communication before I saw her do it. But her dainty fingers and expressive face robbed it of all this, and loaned it a grace all her own. During the many conversations we held on various themes, never once was I made conscious of the awkward medium we were using.

She was very fond of flowers, and especially so of lilies-of-the-valley. After I found this out, I managed to keep a vase filled

with fresh sprays setting on the base of the glass. Some evenings we would bring our chairs up very close and read short poems together. Her criticisms were remarkably acute in the discussions that followed the readings.

Thus we utilized every moment of time the mirror allowed us. We played games when other things became monotonous. And means were always devised to do this, despite the intervention of the mirror.

"I have not been feeling at all well of late," she said one night, during a game of chess.

"You should have told me that before," I reproved. "Perhaps we had best give up the game for the present."

"Suppose we do. I have had such a splitting headache all day. Let us talk instead; I feel too languid for mental exertion."

The next night she was no better; and the night following that much worse. I was very much concerned, but what was there I could do? If I only had the answer to my letter! It was too soon for that, though, and besides, would it make any difference in the present case? I really thought it would; but after sober judgment, I couldn't see how. I had entered so enthusiastically into the events of the past few weeks that they had become real to me, forgetting for the time being their actual singularity. Now that singularity was cropping out again to puzzle me anew.

On the third, fourth and fifth nights I did not see her at all, though I saw that which caused me more concern. About nine o'clock each night two gentlemen came into the room and held earnest conversations for perhaps five minutes. One, a fussy little man, had a black case in his hand, and I took him for the doctor. The other, from his strong resemblance to my mirror girl, was undoubtedly her father. It was quite evident they saw nothing out of the ordinary in the glass, for several times they looked towards it, and their faces never changed. Here was another of those queer things that could not be explained.

I saw her again on the sixth night. Though her face was flushed as with fever, and her eyes unnaturally bright, yet I never saw her look more beautiful. She wore a low neck, sleeveless gown, made of a sheer black material. Her manner was so strange and excitable that I was prompted to ask immediately, "Are you

sure you are doing a wise thing by coming down tonight? Perhaps it would have been better to wait until tomorrow."

"Yes, I know, but the doctor says I'm worse, and perhaps I can't come down tomorrow. They'll never know — every one is out except the servants. Please don't object; something told me I must come down. I don't know why. Besides, I want to sing. Oh! I have some beautiful songs I want to sing to you. That's the way I feel tonight, as if I must sing and play, I have such glorious music running in my head. I know you can't hear, but you must feel it as I feel it; one can't help feeling such music, it fairly vibrates with the exquisite passions of love and death and hope. Oh! please sit where you are while I sing to you of all this."

It seemed an age she sat at the piano, and I looked on as one in a dream. How I would have liked to have heard that voice! Sweet it must have been, and clear as a silver bell. On and on she sang and played, the delirium of fever and the passion of music every moment growing stronger. And I could do nothing. It was like seeing a beautiful bird sing itself to death. I knocked on the glass, and cursed it and the people who had not kept a better watch over her. But to no effect. At last, however, she was compelled to stop for lack of strength. I thought she would faint when she got up from the piano stool. How I longed to take her by the arm and lead her, or call for help. But she recovered herself and tottered over to the door. She had barely enough strength left to talk deaf and dumb. Leaning against the door jamb, she could only manage this much very slowly: "I do hope you felt my songs, they were really very, very beautiful — all about love and hope — I left death out, it is so sad, and one doesn't want to be sad when one isn't well. I'm not feeling quite so well as I was a few minutes ago. I think I will try and get up-stairs now. You will not mind me leaving the sad part out, will you? Good night." With a sweet but wan smile on her face, she threw me a kiss, then helped herself through the door by holding the curtain.

It is needless to say that this last incident left me in a somewhat dazed condition. During the next six nights, I saw the doctor and her father in the mirror nightly, and with them was a

tall, stern-looking man, evidently another doctor. I inferred from their general demeanor that it was a consultation, and that the state of their patient's health was very critical. On the sixth night, the man I took for her father broke down. I could see he was pleading with the doctors.

The suspense and anxiety were beginning to tell on my nerves. I could not sleep when I went to bed, or work at the office during the day. To cap the climax, for four nights the mirror failed to develop its strange phenomenon. Once I sat up all night waiting for the appearance of the frost spot, but without results. The glass gave back nothing but the natural reflection of my library. I feared I was never to see my mirror girl again. But I was, the next night, for the last time.

The frost spot appeared when I had almost given up hope. It cleared away, and I saw it was daytime in the parlor with which I had become so familiar, but the shades must have been drawn down, for the room was dark. I could see almost nothing at first. Presently, however, a bright little beam of sunshine peeped in — from around the side of the shades, I suppose — and fell upon an odd-shaped piece of furniture that slightly resembled a sofa. No doubt it was new, as I had never seen it before. Yes, I was sure it was intended as a sofa: some one was lying on it. A draught of air must have blown the shade open a little more. The sun came in quite strong and shone full on the reclining figure. Why! it was my mirror girl! I was so glad she was able to be down-stairs again. Her face had a sweet smile of repose. The little rogue! she was pretending she was asleep just to fool me. Very well, while she was playing her little joke, I could content myself looking at her. She wore the same black gown as she had worn the night she was so sick, and fixed in the corsage was a spray of lilies-of-the-valley. It did seem strange that she should wear an evening gown during the day, but I took this as another of her fanciful whims. There were lots of other flowers around too. I had not noticed that before. Perhaps they were from thoughtful friends. But there were so many of them! And what was that above her head on the sofa? surely not a wreath! Yes, and of immortels. One doesn't give wreaths of immortels to recovered invalids. Then she wasn't joking, after all.

Slow as I had been to grasp the significance of all these things, I understood now. She would never wake up and laugh at me. No, she was dead — dead. I dashed at the mirror. I would break through that cursed thing at last, and throw myself down by her side and tell her she must wake up and speak to me — speak to me in the voice I had never heard.

This is the last thing I remember clearly. There is a faint recollection of the sound of breaking glass, and of a confusion and many voices afterward, but that is all.

For a whole month I was prostrated with brain fever. The nurse tells me I have had a very hard fight for my life. I am convalescing now, however. This morning, for the first time, I was allowed to look over the large quantity of mail that has accumulated during the time I was sick. One of the first letters I got hold of bore the postmark, Cairo, Egypt. I opened it at once, and found it to be the answer to the letter I had sent in care of the storage and trust company. I will only quote what most applies in the present case.

“What you tell me is most remarkable. The mirror is unquestionably the one that formerly belonged to me. The nick you speak of in the marble on the left-hand corner of the base identifies it without a doubt. It was caused by the fall of a heavy pedestal. Your description is in reality an inventory of the parlor in my old house. As for the rest, I cannot pretend to understand it. Feature by feature, you have given me in your letter an exact picture of my youngest daughter, Geraldine. It was very sad for me to read. The flower of my flock, she died five years ago.”

